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**COMMENTARY**

**ILLUSTRATING THE**

**POETIC OF ARISTOTLE.**

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ILLUSTRATING THE

POETIC OF ARISTOTLE

BY EXAMPLES TAKEN CHIEFLY FROM THE MODERN POETS

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A NEW AND CORRECTED EDITION

COMMENTARY

OF THE

TRANSLATION OF THE POETIC

POETIC OF ARISTOTLE

HENRY JAMES FRY, ESQ.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOHN STODOLSKY, M.D.



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M.DCC.XCII.



COMMENTARY

ILLUSTRATING THE

POETIC OF ARISTOTLE  
PREFACE

BY EXAMINING TAKEN CHIEFLY FROM THE MODERN POETS

A NEW AND CORRECTED EDITION

WHEN I first published the translation of the Poetic in the year 1773, I was not aware of the kind of reception it would meet with. The translation by Rhymers, which I believe exists, does not I believe exist; but probably the notion of a style from two treatises written by him, in which the English writers, and especially Shakespeare, are most partially and unjustly censured for frequent offences against the supposed rules of the dramatic. The version of Dacier's translation into English can hardly be called our own; and that which was published by an anonymous writer in 1775, though some detached pieces are faithfully rendered, is in general as much beneath criticism as it is above comprehension.



But



## PREFACE.

**W**HEN I first published my translation of the Poetic in the year 1788, the English language had nothing of the kind that could properly be called its own. The translation by Rhymer, which Fabricius mentions, does not I believe exist; but probably the notion of it arose from two treatises written by him, in which the English dramatic writers, and especially Shakespear, are most partially and unjustly censured for frequent offences against the supposed rules of the Stagirite. The version of Dacier's translation into English can hardly be called our own; and that which was published by an anonymous writer in 1775, though some detached pieces are faithfully rendered, is in general as much beneath criticism as it is above comprehension.

But



But if this was the case when I ventured on the task, it did not long continue so. My publication was soon followed by a translation of the Poetic from the pen of Mr. Twining: a work of distinguished excellence; and which, had it appeared earlier, would probably have precluded any attempt of mine on the same subject. For though Mr. Twining, with a modesty and candour ever attending on real merit, observes of my translation, that in many places where we differ if I am right, he must be wrong, I am perfectly convinced, that in most places where we differ, the contrary to what he puts hypothetically is in fact true. Yet, though I generally agree with his sentiments, as I do not always, I thought it necessary to prefix an amended edition of my own translation, to this Commentary.

The reader may be surprized after this declaration, to find me oftener combating some of his opinions at length, than acquiescing in his emendations; but though I have frequently mentioned the last, had I done it wherever they occurred, or acknowledged on every occasion the obligation this edition of my translation owes to the justice of Mr. Twining's criticisms, his name would have occurred in every page. But where I have found myself under the necessity of differing from his opinions, I have always thought it incumbent on me to give my own reasons at large for so doing.

In



## PREFACE.

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In my former preface I mentioned an intention of publishing notes on a much larger scale than the extent of the plan I then adopted would allow, provided the ground I proposed to take should not be pre-occupied by Mr. Nares, who had just announced to the public proposals for a very extensive work apparently of the same kind as that which I intended. Finding however that Mr. Nares is not for the present pursuing his design, and being informed by him, that if he did pursue it he imagined it would not at all interfere with mine, I went on with my undertaking, and have ever since the appearance of my translation, been employed in collecting and arranging the materials of the Commentary, which I now venture to lay before the public.

As I do not consider this as a learned work, but as an attempt to render the precepts of Aristotle clear to the English as well as the classical reader, and to enable those who are conversant only with the poets of our own country, to judge how far the rules of the Stagirite, which have been so often quoted and so much misrepresented are really consonant with truth and nature, I have seldom gone into disquisition on difficult and disputed passages, in the Commentary, except when they are connected with general criticism, referring those to the notes on the translation. Whenever I have done otherwise, which is in  
very



very few instances, it has been only when the note has been too long to be inserted at the foot of the page with any convenience to the reader.

On the same principle I have made it a point to introduce no quotation from the ancient writers unaccompanied by an English translation; neither have I confined this precaution to the learned languages, since a knowledge of French and Italian though at present very general, is not universal.

The chief intent of my Commentary as I before announced, is an illustration of the rules, and the examples confirming those rules, which are found in Aristotle's remarks on dramatic and epic poetry, from similar passages in the modern, and more especially in the English poets. This will naturally involve in it some remarks on the difference of the ancient and modern dramatic apparatus, and construction of fable as well narrative as dramatic, and the general principles of imitation as effected by the fine arts. To enlarge more on the subject of the Commentary here, would be superfluous; but it may not be improper to say a few words on the arrangement of it.

When I first looked over the materials I had collected without order or selection, I imagined I saw something like the  
form



## PREFACE.

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form in which the Poetic of Aristotle has come down to us; a sketch with many inaccuracies, some contradictions arising possibly from seeing the same thing in different lights as relating to different circumstances, frequent repetitions, and passages of the poets sometimes partially or erroneously cited from memory, and sometimes only referred to.

A regular arrangement of this work of Aristotle has foiled all the endeavours of the critics. To find order where order never existed is impossible. And as to the division of the Poetic, I thought the letting it continue in chapters, by facilitating the comparison of the translation with the original, more than balanced any advantage that could be attained by trying to divide it according to the subjects of which it treats.

Such being the state of the original work itself, it was absolutely impossible to give any regular form to the Commentary without destroying all connexion between the different remarks it contains and the parts of the Poetic to which they allude. I have therefore broken the Commentary into notes, each referring at top to those passages of the translation from which they arise. In this form, as in the original work, it will sometimes happen, that observations on the same subject



will be thrown at a distance from each other, an inconvenience which I trust will be sufficiently obviated by the frequent references at the bottom of the page, and the index.

Besides the causes already mentioned, much of the obscurity not only in Aristotle, but in most of the ancient writers, is occasioned by the frequent use of the parenthesis, a strong obstacle both to perspicuity and elegance. This in great measure arises from the ancients never doing, what is so frequently done by the moderns, throwing any observation that cannot conveniently be interwoven with the body of the work, into a note; a practice which though in general it may have a tendency to produce carelessness of arrangement as well as of style, is singularly convenient in a work of this nature; but which the ancients never adopted, as from the difficulty of multiplying copies, their compositions were rather intended for public recitation than private perusal.

Strange prejudices have been entertained with regard to this celebrated treatise of Aristotle, especially in this country, where for want of any tolerable translation of it into English, it has either been confined to the cabinet of the learned, or seen through the medium of French criticism. To read the works which have appeared in this country, either censuring

our



# PREFACE

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our dramatic poets for deviating from the rules of Aristotle, or apologizing for Shakspear on the same account from his original and eccentric genius, a person unacquainted with the work itself would be led to imagine, that the three celebrated dramatic unities, as explained by Dacier and his countrymen, and the bloodless action, and unempassioned declamation of the French theatre, were explicitly enjoined and enforced by the rules of the Stagirite. But of all these there is not the least trace; and the whole tendency of Aristotle's doctrine seems to be the instruction of the poet from the example both of excellency and defect in the best dramatic models then before him, how to arrange his fables in such a manner as not to deviate from the rules of truth and nature either in the general plan of them, or in the circumscribed form to which by the practice of the Grecian drama, enforced by custom, law, and superstition, he was forced to confine them. In the first circumstance alone can this doctrine be reckoned as generally applicable to us, and there we may appeal indeed from his authority, but, to use the words of M. Lessing, 'how shall we extricate ourselves from the force of his argument?' In the second it is only so far applicable to our drama as our drama resembles that of Athens.

It has either been confined to the cabinet of the philosopher, or seen through the medium of French criticism. To read the works which have appeared in this country, either censuring



The idea of what Aristotle might say himself of our great poet, could he be supposed to judge of him, is so well expressed in the Essay on the dramatic Character of Falstaff, (a work I have often quoted in the following pages,) that I shall make no apology for inserting it here. Speaking of some of Shakespear's anomalies, the author says, "On such an occasion a fellow like Rhymer, waking from his trance, shall take up his constable's staff, and charge this great magician, this daring practiser of arts inhibited, in the name of Aristotle to surrender, while Aristotle himself, disowning his wretched officer, would fall probably at his feet, and acknowledge his supremacy. "O supreme of dramatic excellence, (might he say,) not to me be imputed the insolence of fools. The bards of Greece were confined within the narrow circle of the chorus, and hence they found themselves constrained to practise for the most part the precision, and copy the details of nature. I followed them, and knew not that a larger circle might be drawn, and the drama extended to the whole reach of human genius. Convinced, I see that a more compendious nature may be obtained; a nature of effects only, to which neither the relation of place, nor continuity of time, are always essential."

On



On first considering the subject, it really seems wonderful to observe with what supercilious contempt any deviation from his supposed rules, has been considered by those who profess themselves disciples of the school of Aristotle. But our surprise will a little cease when we recollect with what almost divine honors the Aristotelean doctrines were once received into the universities of christendom; inasmuch that the philosopher of Stagira has been sometimes placed by the side of the apostle of Tarsus. For our countryman Roger Bacon, in his *Opus Majus* says, 'In a word, Aristotle hath the same authority in philosophy that the apostle Paul hath in divinity.'

The age of blind veneration is now over, and Aristotle, like other writers, can only be estimated by his merit. It is impossible that either in philosophy or criticism he could foresee and provide rules for the changes succeeding centuries must make in the objects of both. The increased materials of the latter, however, bear no proportion to those of the former, yet perhaps even in both whoever makes allowance for the difference of manners, customs, and opinions, accumulated growth of science, and more universal diffusion of knowledge, may be apt to think with Dr. Harrison, in Fielding's *Amelia*, that Aristotle is not so great a blockhead as some take him to be who have never read him.



All the examples by which I have tried to illustrate the rules of Aristotle, whether as excellencies to be imitated, or defects to be avoided, I have taken from the most celebrated writers. I feel strongly the delicacy of my situation with regard to living writers in this respect. To point out the errors of indifferent authors would answer no end. I trust therefore no author of real and acknowledged merit will be offended with me for taking that liberty with him, which I have not scrupled to take with Shakespear, Milton, and Pope. Aristotle has drawn his sources both of praise and censure from the best models; the latter not as breaches of any positive law, established by the capricious will of arbitrary criticism, but as occasional deviations from their own general practice, on which alone the true principles of just criticism must be founded, the rules of which, like the fundamental laws of this country, are not founded on the authority of imperial rescripts, but on reason and justice, enforced by universal consent, and sanctioned by the wisdom of ages.

It remains to mention the assistance I have received. To Mr. Winstanley, besides the obligation I owe to him in common with all his readers for his accurate edition of the Poetic, as well as his judicious remarks on it, I am much indebted for many valuable emendations and remarks which he imparted

to



to me while I was engaged in the translation. Mr. Jackson of Exeter had the goodness to look over the few observations I have ventured to hazard on music. And if what little I have said on a sister art, of which I am a warm admirer, though a very incompetent judge, has any claim to the indulgence of the public, I owe it to the obliging communications of Mr. Hodges, who is not more enabled, by the versatility of his genius, to investigate every principle of an art in which he so much excels, than he is ready on all occasions to exert his good offices for the assistance and advantage of his friends.

In regard to quotations, some of my readers may think I have been too profuse, and others too sparing. Books of ready occurrence I have seldom quoted at any length, except when the subject required particular investigation; but to the best of my recollection I have never borrowed a thought from any writer without acknowledging it. From the *Dramaturgie* of M. Lessing I have occasionally inserted large extracts, as it is a work not generally known, nor yet translated into our language, though abounding with just and original criticism; and I shall even here avail myself of his concluding words as a kind of apology for what may possibly be objected against parts of the following work. 'Let my readers remember that these papers are not intended to form a dramatic system.

' I am



I am not obliged to solve all the difficulties that I myself start. It is of little consequence if my thoughts are sufficiently connected, or if they are sometimes contradictory. It is enough if they may furnish matter on which my reader may exercise his own judgment. I only wish to scatter *fermenta cognitionis*.

The Reader is requested to correct the following Errors of the Press.

Page 16, [A] line 2 from the bottom, for translator, read the translator.

Page 61, [G] line 2 from the bottom, for *προσθήσασι*, read *προσθήσασιν*.

Page 201, [I] line 7 from the bottom, for attendant, read attendants.

Page 395, line 3, for condusive, read conclusive.

Page 401, lines 13, 14, for Illius and agnum, read Illius and agnus.

Page 496, line 10, for shew read shews.



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the occurrence of the same, which are to be noted and the

## THE

POETIC OF ARISTOTLE.

## CHAP. I.

OF THE NATURE OF POETRY, AND THE OTHER IMITATIVE ARTS  
WITH WHICH IT IS CONNECTED, IN GENERAL; TOGETHER  
WITH THEIR DIFFERENCES.—OF THE FIRST DIFFERENCE;—  
THE MEANS BY WHICH THEY IMITATE.

**I** PROPOSE to treat of the Poetic Art itself, and its several species; of the power possessed by each, and what arrangement of fable is most calculated to produce poetical excellence; of the number and quality of its parts, and of the other things belonging to the subject; beginning, according to the natural order, with its first principles.



The Epopee and Tragedy, as also Comedy and Dithyrambics, and the greatest part of those compositions which are set to the flute and the lyre, all agree in the general character of being imitations: but they are distinguished from each other by three circumstances; either by using means of imitation different in their kind, or by the difference of the things imitated, or by imitating in a different manner.

For as there are artists, who, some through skill, and some through practice, imitate many things by colours and lines, and others by the voice [A]; so all the arts just mentioned effect an imitation by means of rhythm [B], of language, and of harmony; and these either separate or mixed. Those things, for example, which are set to the flute or the lyre, or any other instrument of the same powers, as the pipe, imitate by rhythm and harmony alone; while the dance imitates by rhythm only, independant of harmony; for there are some dancers who, regu-

[A] I see no reason for substituting δι' ἀμφοῖν, for διὰ τῆς φωνῆς, in this place, as is proposed by Heinsius, Dacier, and Batteux: χρώμασι, σχήμασι, and φωνῆς, are the words opposed to ῥυθμῶ, λόγῳ, and ἀρμονίᾳ, and not διὰ τέχνης, and διὰ συνηθείας, as Batteux has supposed. “Les uns exécutent par certains pratiques de l'art, les autres par l'habitude seul, quelquesuns par l'un et l'autre ensemble; de même—l'imitation se fait ou par un seul de ces moyens, (i. e. le rhythm, la parole, et le chant,) ou par plusieurs ensemble.” But I do not see what opposition there can be between the manner by which a person acquires excellence in one art, and the means he uses to effect an imitation in another. The imitation διὰ τῆς φωνῆς does not mean by words, but by sounds, like the imitation of the singing of birds, or that effected by vocal music, when the artist tries to make the sound “an echo to the sense.”

[B] By rhythm, is to be understood, cadence, time, or movement. ῥυθμὸς, τάξις ἡμμελος ἀκολούθῃ ἀρμονίας. SUIDAS.

lating



lating their gestures by rhythm, can imitate manners, passions, and actions.

The Epopee uses plain language or verse, either mixing different measures, or confining itself to one sort, as has continued the practice to the present time [c]. For else there would be no general name by which

[c] That is, unless all imitation, by means of language only, as well in prose, and verse of different sorts, as in hexameter verse alone, which is appropriated to the regular epic poem, can be comprehended under the general name of Epopee, there will be no common character under which such compositions can be classed. That the word *ἑποποιία* had this extensive meaning, as well as the more limited sense in which Aristotle afterwards uses it, will appear from the authorities quoted by Heinsius, note 8, on this chapter, and from Batteux, and Harles, and Vossius *De Artis Poeticæ Naturâ*, p. 279, edit. Rumbach. The Monthly Reviewer, in his criticism on Cooke's edition of the Poetic, is of opinion, that οὐδὲν γὰρ is connected with *πᾶσαι τυγχάνουσιν ἔσαι μιμήσεις τὸ σύνολον*. But this will throw the principal subject of this chapter, and which is continued through the two succeeding ones, into a parenthesis. If this sense is adopted, I would rather read, if it were not too bold an alteration, οὐδὲν γὰρ ἂν ἔχοιμεν ὀνόμασι κοινὸν—ΠΑΛΗΝ μίμησιν, οἱ ἀνθρώποι γε κ.τ.λ. considering *ποιῶντο* as a verb neuter, as it is frequently used by Aristotle in this work.

Many of the commentators, among whom may be reckoned the celebrated Metafasio, will not believe that prose is meant by *λογοῖς ψίλοις*, but think the conjunction *ἦ* is not disjunctive, but explanatory; and so Goulston, "sermonibus nudis, sive APPELLARE MALUMUS metris." But, then, why should Aristotle produce prose examples? For whether the *Σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι* mean the dialogues of Plato, or of Alexamenos the Teian, mentioned in a fragment of Aristot. de Poetis, quoted by Vittorio, and which were in verse; it appears from a fragment of Aristotle, quoted by Athenæus, from another of an anonymous writer, preserved by Montfaucon, in his *Bibliotheca Coisliniana*, and from Suidas, that the Mimes of Sophron were certainly in prose. But though Aristotle, treating the subject philosophically, is obliged to class these compositions under the general name of *ἑποποιία*, it is obvious he does not, as



which we could distinguish the Mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus, and the Socratic Dialogues, or even imitations that might be made in iambic, elegiac, or any other verse of the same nature.

Men, indeed, affixing the idea of poetry to versification, are accustomed to call some elegiac poets, and others epic poets, not distinguishing them by the nature of the imitation, but from the structure of the verse; for even if a treatise on the arts of medicine or music is composed in verse, they are used to give the appellation of Poet to the author; but Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common with each other except the verse; therefore, though one indeed may justly be styled a poet, the other is rather a naturalist than a poet.

For the same reason, if a person, though by mixing all the different kinds of verse, should form an imitation, (like the Hippocentaur of Chæremon, which is a mixed rhapsody of all measures) shall he be denied the name of Poet [D]? This therefore is the proper manner of distinguishing, as to [E] these circumstances.

a critic, countenance any idea of a regular epic poem, either in prose or mixed verse; since in chapter iv. he reckons the love of verse equally with the love of imitation, as one of the natural causes of poetry, and in chapter xxiv. he mentions the heroic measure as solely calculated for the Epopee, and says it would be absurd to use any other sort, or a mixture of many, and produces the composition of Chæremon as an instance of such absurdity.

[D] I follow Heinsius, who proposes to remove the difficulty of this passage by a note of interrogation.

[E] Περὶ μὲν ἑν τῶν, (one MS. reads τῶτο) i. e. the objects in dispute, imitation and verse, as essential characters of poetry. See note 3 of the larger notes on this chapter.

There



There are some kinds of poetry that employ all the means that have been mentioned, viz. rhythm, melody, and verse; as the Dithyrambics and the Nomi, and Tragedy also, and Comedy: and yet these differ from each other [F], some using them all at the same time, and others in separate parts.

These are the differences of the arts, as to the means by which the imitation is made.

[F] The Dithyrambics and Nomi use them all together, Tragedy and Comedy only in separate parts; or as Aristotle explains it afterwards in chapter vi. τὸ διὰ μέτρων ἔνι μόνον περαίνεσθαι, καὶ πάλιν ἕτερα διὰ μέλους. For an account of the Nomi see chapter iii. note [B].



## CHAP. II.

## OF THE SECOND DIFFERENCE.—THE THINGS IMITATED.

SINCE persons acting are the objects of imitation, and those persons must necessarily be either good or bad; (for the manners almost always arise from these circumstances alone, it being by virtue or vice that all mankind differ from each other as to their manners;) the persons imitated must either be represented as better than those of the present time, or worse, or as they actually [A] are. So among the painters, Polygnotus draws his figures better, Pauso worse, and Dionysius as they are. It is also evident that the same distinctions will be found in each of the imitations that have been mentioned, and they will become different from imitating different things; for in the dance, and in the compositions that are set to the flute and the lyre, these distinctions will be found, as also in the Epopee which only uses language or plain verse; for example, Homer forms his characters better, and Cleophon as they are, but Hegemon the Thasian, who first invented Parodies, and Nicocharis who wrote the Deliad, make them worse. The same distinctions will be found in the Dithyrambics and Nomi [B]; as, for instance, in the

[A] I follow Winstanley in this whole passage, adding ἡ καὶ τοιοῦτους, which Batteux says is confirmed by a ms.

[B] Though the printed editions in general read μίμους here, all the mss. the edition of Aldus, and the old translation of Valla, read νόμους, and it appears that Timotheus wrote a poem of that kind, called The Persians, a line of which is quoted by Plutarch in his Life of



the Persians, and Cyclops, of Timotheus and Philoxenes. And in this lies the difference between Tragedy and Comedy; the one making its characters better, and the other worse, than those of the present time.

Philopœmon. The Νόμος was a species of poem originally composed in honour of Apollo, and derived its name, not from νόμος, LAW, but from being sung by shepherds ἐν νομοῖς (among the pastures). The Dithyrambics were a sort of loose poem in honor of Bacchus; though the name was sometimes used for lyric poetry in general. Διθυράμβοι λέγονται οἱ λυρικοὶ, ὡς ὁ Πινδαρος, καὶ ἄλλῳ οἱ πρὸς Διόνυσον ὕμνοι. Comm. mss. in Arist. Rhet. iii. apud Cod. Laud. For a very particular account of the Nomi, see the Bishop of Chester's learned and ingenious treatise *De Decreto Lacedæmoniorum contra Timotheum Milefium*.



## CHAP. III.

OF THE THIRD DIFFERENCE.—THE MANNER OF IMITATION.—  
ENQUIRY INTO THE FIRST INVENTION OF THE DRAMA.

THE third difference comprehends the manner in which the imitation is made. For the objects may be the same, and the imitation performed by the same means, and yet [A] in a different manner; as, for instance, either like Homer, sometimes by simple narration, and sometimes by assuming a different character; or entirely by narration without assuming any character; or by introducing all the persons imitated as agents and performers.

These, as we said at first, are the three differences of imitation, viz. the means by which it is performed, the thing imitated, and the manner how. So that in the objects of imitation, Sophocles is the same kind of imitator with Homer, for they both imitate persons of dignity; and in the manner of imitation with Aristophanes, for they both effect it by agents [B] and performers.

From the circumstance of imitating by persons acting, some say the name of Drama is derived; and on this account the Dorians claim the invention both of Tragedy and Comedy; (for the people of Megara

[A] The words *ἑτέρως δὲ*, seem wanting to make this passage clear.

[B] Undoubtedly *δρῶντες* and *πράττοντες*.



claim the honor of Comedy; the natives, as being invented there during their democratical government, and those who migrated from Sicily, because the Poet Epicharmus flourished there long before the time of Chonnides and Magnes: while some of the Dorians of Peloponnesus claim the invention of Tragedy.) Founding their pretensions on the names; for they say villages are by them called *COMÆ*, which the Athenians term *DEMI*; and that comedies [c] have not their name from *COMAZO*, to revel, but from their performers being banished with disgrace from cities, and obliged to wander from village to village; and that they use the word *DRAN* [d] to signify ACT, or PERFORM, but the Athenians use *PRATTEIN*.

And this is sufficient as to the number, and quality, of the differences incident to imitation.

[c] Though the Dorians are said to be the inventors of tragedy as well as of comedy, the etymology of comedy only is given. Athenæus says the name of comedy was common to both dramas, as it is now in some degree among the French, and as we use the word comedian.

[d] Hence the word drama.



## C H A P. IV.

## OF THE ORIGIN OF POETRY, AND ITS DIVISION INTO SEVERAL SPECIES.

**P**OETRY in general seems to derive its origin from two causes, and those founded on nature.

Imitation is congenial with man from his infancy. One of his characteristic distinctions from other animals is the being most addicted to it, and acquiring his first knowledge by it; and besides, the delight it gives is universal [A]. A proof of this may be drawn from the works of art; where those things which we view with pain in themselves, we delight to see represented as accurately as possible; such as the figures of the most savage wild beasts, and of dead bodies. And the reason of this is, that to acquire knowledge is not only pleasing to the lovers of science, but to others also, though they partake it in a less degree. Now, the cause of the delight taken in viewing these representations arises from reasoning about the design of the artist, and discovering the likeness, which is in some degree acquiring knowledge. But when it happens that the object represented has never been seen before, the pleasure is not derived from the imitation, but from the execution, the colouring, or some other cause of that kind [B].

[A] In the first edition I rendered this 'delighting in every species of it,' reading *πάντα* for *πάντας*, which, were there any authority for it, would agree better with what follows.

[B] *Rerumque ignarus, imagine gaudet.*

VIRGIL.



The love of harmony and rhythm being equally natural to us with that of imitation, (for verse is evidently a species of rhythm) those who were by nature most addicted to these propensities, improving by degrees, first produced Poetry on extemporaneous subjects; which poetry was divided according to the peculiar manners of the persons who cultivated it. Those who were of a more serious turn, imitated noble actions, and the fortunes of illustrious men; while others of a more humble genius imitated the actions and fortunes of meaner persons, first composing satires, as the others had hymns to the gods, and the praises of virtuous men.

We can ascribe no poem of this inferior sort to any person earlier than Homer, though it is probable there were many. We must begin, therefore, from Homer, in whose *Margites* [c], and other compositions of the same nature, that kind of verse was introduced which is now called Iambic, as being the most adapted to the subject, and which name was given it because they used to satirize (*IAMBIZON*) each other in that sort of measure. And hence the earlier Poets came to be distinguished according to their use of the heroic and iambic measure.

As Homer, therefore, was the greatest poet on serious subjects, standing alone in point of excellence, not only from the general merit of his imitations, but from the dramatic form he gave them, so he also first taught the proper system of comedy, forming the comic drama on

[c] A satirical poem written in various measures by Homer. *Margites* was not a real, but a fictitious name, derived from *μάργης* or *μάργος*, signifying FOOLISH, IGNORANT. See Lessing's *Dramaturgie*.



general ridicule instead of personal invective; for the Margites has the same relation to comedy, that the Iliad and the Odyssæy have to tragedy. And succeeding poets, each pursuing that kind of poetry which was most agreeable to his natural genius, became writers of comedy instead of satire, and tragedy instead of epic poetry; the forms of these being more excellent and held in higher esteem than the others.

To examine whether tragedy has acquired its perfect form, either judged by itself, or with regard to the representation, is another matter; but both that and comedy, from being at first extemporaneous productions, were augmented by slow degrees; one by the writers of dithyrambics, and the other by the writers of the phallics [D], which still continue countenanced by the laws of some cities. And this process will appear manifest on examining [E] them. Tragedy, after undergoing many changes, stopped when it had attained its natural form. Æschylus first increased the number of the actors from one to two, reduced the chorus, and made the dialogue the principal part of the Tragedy [F]. Sophocles introduced three actors and the painting of the scenes. Till at last, from trifling fable and ridiculous language, it attained gravity and dignity; and quitting the satyric [G] form, the

[D] A sort of vulgar poem in honor of the rural deities.

[E] I follow Winstanley, who proposes to read αὐτοῖς for αὐτῶν.

[F] I have here adopted the meaning, and indeed, the words of Mr. Twining's translation.

[G] Satyric here has no relation to satiric, or sarcastic poetry, but was a kind of verse adapted to the dance in which the Satyrs were supposed to take delight. This Virgil alludes to in his eclogue v.

“Saltantes Satyros imitabitur Alpheibœus.”

verse



verse became iambic instead of tetrameter. The tetrameter verse was used first on account of the poetry being in the satyric form, and adapted to the dance: but when dialogue was introduced, Nature herself pointed out the proper measure; since of all verse the iambic is most calculated for discourse, as we frequently use iambic measure in common conversation, but hexameter very seldom, and only when we get above the usual style of dialogue. After this the number of the acts [H] was increased, and other ornaments added.

And this is sufficient concerning these things in general. To investigate each of them separately would be a work of great length.

[H] The word *ἑρσιόδιον* here, and in some other parts of the Poetic, signifies the division of the drama that we call an act. See its definition, chap. xii.



## CHAP. V.

OF COMEDY.—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EPIC POETRY AND  
TRAGEDY.

COMEDY, as has already been observed, is an imitation of worse [A] persons; yet not such as are bad with respect to general depravity, but in that particular species of turpitude which is calculated to excite ridicule. And ridicule is produced by errors unattended by dangerous or fatal consequences; thus deformity of body is ridiculous, provided it is not occasioned by pain.

The changes in tragedy and from whom they originated are well known; but it is different with regard to comedy, from its being less cultivated at first. For it was not till late that the comic chorus was appointed by the magistrate, but it was performed by voluntary actors, till at length, having attained certain forms peculiar to itself, the writers of comedy were deemed worthy of remembrance. Nevertheless, it is still unknown who introduced the masks, the prologue, the number of actors, and other things of that kind. Epicharmus and Phormis commenced the practice of giving a fable to comedy, the origin of which must therefore be derived from Sicily: for among the Athenians, Crates was the first who forsook personal satire, and introduced a general subject or fable.

[A] That is, worse than those of the present time in general. See chap. ii.



The epopee agrees only with tragedy in using verse, and imitating things of importance by means of language; but it differs from it in only using simple verse, and being narrative; it also differs in regard to length, for tragedy endeavours as much as possible to confine itself to one revolution of the sun, or only to exceed it a little; but the epopee is not limited as to its duration: and even tragedy, in its origin, had the same latitude as epic poetry.

As to the parts, some are common to both, and some peculiar to tragedy. Whoever, therefore, can judge of a good or bad tragedy, may judge also of an epic poem: for whatever is essential to the epopee [B] may be found in tragedy, but many things belong to tragedy that are not in the epopee.

[B] Aristotle seems here to open those sentiments of the superiority of tragedy, which he confirms in the concluding chapter.



## CHAP. VI.

## OF TRAGEDY, AND ITS PARTS.

LEAVING imitation in hexameter [A] verse and comedy to be considered hereafter, we will now confine our enquiries to tragedy, taking its definition from what has been already said.

Tragedy, then, is an imitation in ornamented language of an action important and complete, and possessing a certain degree of magnitude, having its forms distinct in their respective parts, and by the representation of persons acting, and not by narration, [B] effecting through the means of pity and terror, the purgation of such passions.

By ornamented language, I mean language accompanied by rhythm, harmony, and measure; and by the forms being distinct in their respective parts, that some parts attain their end by verse only, and others have the assistance of music.

[A] That is the regular epopee to which hexameter verse was an essential ornament.

[B] The conjunction *ἀλλὰ*, which is omitted in all the mss. should certainly not be inserted, as no opposition between *ἀπαγγελίας* and *ἐλὲς καὶ φόβος* can possibly be intended. See Win-  
 stanley's note. For a farther investigation of this celebrated definition of tragedy, with the various opinions of different commentators and translator's own conjectures (he presumes to offer nothing more,) the reader is referred to note 1, ch. vi. of the Commentary.

As



As the imitation is performed by persons acting; in the first place it will be a necessary consequence that the decorations of the theatre must be considered as a principal part of tragedy, and then the music, and the language, for these are the means of imitation. By language, I mean the composition of the verse; the definition and power of music is sufficiently obvious.

Secondly, as tragedy is the imitation of an action, which action is represented by agents, or persons acting, whose qualities must be derived from manners and sentiments (for by these we pronounce on the qualities of actions;) manners and sentiments must be included as two natural causes of our actions, from which all our successes and disappointments are derived. The fable (I mean by the fable the combination of the incidents,) comprehends the imitation of the action; the manners enable us to decide on the characters of those who act; and the sentiments discover the intention or opinion of those who speak.

Every tragedy, therefore, has six parts, according to which we decide on its merit. The fable, the manners, the language, the sentiments, the apparatus of the theatre, and the music. And of these [c], two are the means by which the imitation is performed, one the mode of imitation, and the other three the things imitated. And besides these there are no other parts; but these are in general use, for apparatus, manners, fable, language, music, and sentiment, are [d] equally essential to every tragedy.

[c] The language and the music are the means of imitation. The apparatus, (including the actors, *δραῦντες*,) the mode of imitation. And the fable, manners, and sentiment, the things imitated.

[d] Aristotle seems to contradict this assertion when he says, in the next page, that a tragedy may exist without manners, though it cannot without action. Winstanley proposes to remove



But the principal of these parts is the combination of the incidents. For tragedy is not an imitation of particular persons, but of actions in general, of human life, of good and ill fortune, for happiness depends upon action. The main purpose or end of human life consists in a certain mode of action [E] and not in a quality; and though the manners of men are derived from their qualities, their happiness and misery depend on their actions. Actions, therefore, are not represented for the purpose of imitating manners, though manners are necessarily interwoven with the action; therefore action and fable are the end of tragedy, and the end is the object to be principally considered in every thing. Tragedy cannot exist without action, but it may without manners; for most of the tragedies of the later writers are without manners; there being many who hold the same character among the poets that Zeuxis did with regard to Polygnotus among the painters: for Polygnotus was [F] excellent in expressing manners, in which the pictures of Zeuxis were deficient. If a set of moral sentences should be put together with the language and sentiment well executed, it would by no means produce the effect of tragedy, which would be much rather obtained by a tragedy, that, pos-

the  $\epsilon\kappa$  from before  $\text{ὀλίγοι}$ , and insert it after  $\text{ὅψιν}$  reading  $\text{ὅψιν οὐκ ἔχει πάν κ. τ. λ.}$  and making the sense, "Few use all these forms, for every drama does not equally excel in appearance, manners, &c."

[E]  $\text{Πράξεις τινες καὶ ἐνεργεῖαι τὸ τέλος}$ , ETHIC. L. I. ch. VIII. Aristotle considers virtuous dispositions as of little use unless shewn by virtuous actions. So Horace, though with some difference in the application,

— ' Paulum sepultæ distat inertiae

' Celata virtus. —

[F]  $\text{Ἀγαθός}$ , mss. which I think preferable to  $\text{ἀγαθῶν}$ .

selling



selling these in an inferior degree, had a fable, and combination of incidents. It must further be added, that the peripetia, or sudden revolution of fortune, and the discovery, which are the principal causes of a tragedy being interesting, are parts of the fable. And, besides, those who first attempt to write dramatically, can sooner excel in the language, and the manners, than in combining the incidents, as was the case of almost all the earliest poets.

The fable then is the chief part, and, as it were, the soul of tragedy. The manners hold the second place, which we may compare to the coloring of a picture; the finest colors laid on promiscuously will not please so much as a figure only in chalk. The professed end of tragedy is to imitate an action, and chiefly by means of that action to shew the qualities of the persons acting [G].

Sentiment holds the third place, and its merit consists in making the dialogue consonant with the fable and the characters. And this may be done either in the familiar or the rhetorical style, the [H] ancients using the former, and the moderns the latter. Manners may be defined, a manifestation of the intentions of the persons acting. Therefore [I]

[G] As though the intent of painting is to imitate an object and not a color, yet when the object is painted, the color, though less essential than the outline will still be shewn; so though the professed end of tragedy is to imitate an action, yet as the qualities of the actors must be discovered in the course of the action, manners will become a necessary appendage to fable, and consequently hold the second place among the requisites of tragedy.

[H] The same observation may be made on the English tragic writers; the styles of Shakespear and Thomson have exactly this difference.

[I] I have adopted the transposition proposed by Winstanley, and which Batteux says is confirmed by a ms. in the king of France's library. See Mr. Twining's note.



those pieces are destitute of characteristic manners, in which it is not manifest what the speaker would chuse, and what avoid. Sentiment is the actual declaration that a thing is so, or is not so, or is the assertion of some general proposition.

The fourth requisite is language. By language, I mean, as I said before, the interpretation of our meaning by the use of words, and which has the same power both in verse and prose.

Of the remaining parts, the music holds the fifth place, and is indeed the chief of the ornamental parts; for the decorations of the stage, though very interesting, have the least connexion with the poetic art, the power of tragedy being independent of the performance and the actors, besides in preparing the decorations the art of the manager of the theatre is more conspicuous than that of the poet.

CHAP.



those pieces are destitute of characteristic manners, in which it is not manifest what the speaker would chuse, and what avoid. Sentiment is the actual declaration that a thing is, or is not so, or is the assertion of some general proposition. **CHAP. VII.**  
OF THE COMBINATION OF THE INCIDENTS.

The fourth requisite is language. By language, I mean, as I said before, **HAVING** defined these things, we will proceed to consider what is requisite in the combination of the incidents, since that is the first, and principal part of tragedy.

Of the remaining parts, the music holds the fifth place, and is indeed **Tragedy**, according to our position, is an imitation of a perfect, and entire action, possessing a certain degree of magnitude; for an action may be entire and yet want magnitude. What I mean by entire, is comprehending in itself a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself necessarily follow any other event, but to which some other events may naturally succeed. An end is just the contrary, for it is that, which, either of necessity, or according to the general course of things, must follow some other event, but requires nothing after it. A middle requires other circumstances both to precede and follow it. A poet therefore who would form his fable well ought not to begin or end it casually, but should follow the ideas we have mentioned.

As to magnitude, an animal, or any other thing that has constituent parts, to be beautiful, must not only have those parts well connected, but should also have a certain proper size, for beauty depends on size as well as symmetry; on which account no very small animal can be beautiful, for the view being made in almost an imperceptible space of time, will be confused: neither can a very large one, for as the whole view cannot be taken in at once, the unity and completeness that should result from it



will escape the spectator; suppose, for instance, an animal ten thousand stadia in length. As, therefore, animals and other bodies should have such a size as may easily be comprehended in one view, so the dramatic fable should have such a length that the [A] connexion of the circumstances may easily be remembered.

As to the length, as far as regards the time of the performance and the spectators, it has no relation to the poetic art. If, indeed, an hundred tragedies were to be acted successively, they must be acted by the hour-glass, as they say was sometimes formerly done. But as to the natural boundary of the action, the greater it is the better, provided it be perspicuous. In short, to give the definition in simple terms, that is the proper boundary of the length, in which by a necessary or probable succession of incidents, a change of fortune from happiness to misery, or from misery to happiness, may be effected.

[A] I conceive this addition necessary to explain clearly the meaning of Aristotle. The most complicated and incoherent fable imaginable, if it were much shorter, might be more easily remembered than the story of *Œdipus* as to the mere words, though the connexion of the circumstances would be more difficultly retained.



## CHAP. VIII.

## OF THE FABLE.

THE unity of a fable does not depend on its relating to one person only, as some people imagine. For as out of the variety of accidents that may happen to one object, [A] some may have no connexion with each other; so there may be many actions of one man from which no single uniform action can be deduced. From mistaking this, the error of those poets who wrote the *Heracleid*, the *Theseid*, and other poems of that sort, seems to have proceeded: for they imagined, as Hercules was one person, a fable that related only to him must consequently possess the proper unity. Homer, as he was superior in every thing else, appears, either from art or natural genius, to have had the most excellent idea of this; for in composing the *Odyssey* he did not comprehend all that happened to Ulysses, as his being wounded [B] on Parnassus, or feigning

[A] *τῷ γε ἐνὶ* instead of *τῷ γένει*, Heinsius. Batteux translates it: "Car de même que, de plusieurs choses qui arrivent a un seul HOMME, on ne peut faire un seul evenement; de même aussi de plusieurs actions que fait un seul homme, on ne peut faire un seul action." But I rather chuse to consider *τῷ ἐνὶ* as of the neuter gender, otherwise there hardly seems a sufficient distinction between the illustration, and the thing illustrated, poetical action comprehending what a person suffers as well as performs.

[B] It must be observed that Homer does mention this circumstance in the *Odyssey*, l. xix, and from the scar he is discovered by Euryclea; on which account Harles, in his edition of the *Poetic*, corrects the passage thus: *οἷον πληγῆναι μὲν ἐν τῷ Παρνασσῷ, ΟΥΔΕ μανῆναι ποιεῖσθαι ἐν τῷ ἀγερμῷ*. "The wound, indeed, because it had relation to the circumstances of the fable; but not his feigning madness, because it had no connexion with it."

madness



madness at the assembling of the army, between which events there was no necessary or probable connexion; but he confined the *Odyssæy*, and the *Iliad* likewise, to one action.

As, therefore, in the other imitative arts, the imitation is single when one object is imitated, so a dramatic fable has unity if it imitates one complete action, the parts of which are so constituted, that any of them being either altered or taken away, would change and confuse the whole. For that can never be esteemed a part of any thing which makes no sensible difference whether it is there or not.



## CHAP. IX.

OF THE OBJECT OF POETRY, AND HOW IT DIFFERS FROM  
HISTORY.

IT appears from what has been said, that the object of the poet is not to relate what has actually happened, but what may possibly happen, either with probability, or from necessity. The difference between the poet and the historian does not arise from one writing in verse, and the other in prose; for if the work of Herodotus were put into verse, it would be no less a species of history in verse than it is in prose. But the difference consists in this, that one relates what has actually been done, the other what may be done. Poetry, therefore, is more philosophical and instructive than history. For poetry speaks rather of general things, and history of particular. By general things, I mean what any person of such a character would probably and naturally say or do in such a situation; and this is what poetry aims at even [A] in giving names to the characters. By particular things I mean what any individual, as Alcibiades for instance, either acted or suffered in reality.

And this is now conspicuous in comedy, where the poets (not like the writers of satirical pieces, who introduce personal characters,) first form their fable, and then add any casual names; whereas in tragedy the names of persons who have really existed are retained. And this is done be-

[A] For instance, calling a faithful servant Parmeno, and a soldier Thrafo, or Politon. This is generally the case in the modern drama, with the same exception as to tragedy.



cause we give credit to things which we know to be possible; now, events which have never happened we can hardly believe to be possible, but what has actually happened is evidently possible, for had it been impossible it could not have happened [B]. Nevertheless, in some tragedies, there are only a few known names, and the rest are fictitious, and in others there are none, as in the *Anthos* of Agatho, which does not fail to afford pleasure, though the incidents and characters are equally feigned. It need not, therefore, be an invariable rule to adhere to the received fables on which tragedies are generally founded; indeed, it would be ridiculous to endeavour scrupulously to do it, since those fables that are known, are known only to a few, and yet give equal delight to all.

From these things, it is clear that the character of poet [C] is rather derived from the composition of the fable, than the verse, because imitation constitutes the poet, and this [D] is the imitation of an action. Even if the poem is founded on real facts the author may yet be a poet, since there is no reason why many events that have really happened may not be capable of that general probability and possibility, from the proper arrangement of which he may justly be esteemed a poet.

[B] This is so obvious a truth that I think the critic might have trusted to the sagacity of his readers for the discovery of it.

[C] The English reader must be informed, that *POET*, in the original, signifies *MAKER*; which word is used for poet in a book entitled, *The Art of English Poetrie*, printed in 1589, and quoted by Warton in his *Observations on Spenser*, vol. i. p. 52.

[D] The composition of the fable.



Of simple fables and actions, the episodic are the worst, I call a fable episodic, when the episodes follow each other without probability or connexion: These are made by bad poets from their own want of genius, and by good ones to please the performers; for considering only the representation, and extending the action beyond its proper length, they are often forced to violate the connexion of the fable,

As the imitation should not only be of a perfect action, but likewise of one calculated to produce pity and fear; and as those objects will be principally attained if the events happen contrary to expectation, and yet are consequences of each other: (for by that means surprize will be more strongly excited than if they seemed to happen by accident, because, even among accidental things, those are most surprizing that have the appearance of design, as the instance of the statue of Mityus in Argos falling down, and killing his murderer while he was looking at it, for such events do not seem merely casual,) fables of this kind [E] must be the most beautiful.

[E] Where the events arise from each other contrary to expectation. *Should be omitted, as otherwise there will be nothing to answer to it: It is at the beginning of this paragraph which is all one sentence.*

[B] This is so obvious a truth that I think the critic might have trusted to the sagacity of his readers for the discovery of it.

[C] The English reader must be informed, that poet, in the original, signifies maker, which word is used for poet in a book entitled, The Art of English Poetry, printed in 1780, and quoted by Warton in his Observations on Spenser, vol. i. p. 52.

[D] The composition of the fable.



## CHAP. X.

## OF THE DIFFERENT SORTS OF FABLE.

**FABLES** are either simple or complicated, for so are those actions of which fables are an imitation. I call that a simple action, which, being (as has been defined,) connected [A] and uniform, has the transition of fortune without peripetia, [B] or discovery: and that a complicated action, where the transition is effected by the means of peripetia, or discovery, or both. These should arise out of the fable itself, and appear the necessary or probable consequence of what has happened before: for there is a wide difference between one event happening in consequence of another, or only following it.

[A] *Συνεχὴς*. Continuous. Having the events depending on each other. This part of the definition does not relate to the simple fable only, but is equally applicable to the complicated.

[B] *Περὶπέτεια*. An unexpected revolution of fortune. I have retained the word in the translation, as it is naturalized in the language of dramatic criticism.



## CHAP. XI.

## OF THE PERIPETIA, DISCOVERY, AND PATHOS.

**T**HE peripetia, as has already been defined, is an unexpected reverse of fortune in the persons acting, necessarily or probably arising from the incidents. As in the *Œdipus*, a person coming with the idea of comforting that prince, and removing his apprehensions about his mother by discovering who he really is, produces the contrary effect. And in the tragedy of *Lynceus*, he being led out to die, and Danaüs following to kill him, it happens, from the course of the action, that Danaüs is slain, and Lynceus preserved.

The discovery, as the name implies, is a transition from ignorance to knowledge, producing either friendship, or hatred, between the characters as they are designed for happiness, or distress. The discovery is most beautiful when accompanied by the peripetia, as in the tragedy of *Œdipus*; though there are other sorts of discovery, for it may arise from accidental, or inanimate things, or a person may be known by performing or omitting some particular act; but that I first mentioned has most connexion with the fable and the action; and such a discovery and peripetia will produce that pity and terror, of which tragedy is defined to be an imitation, as from this the happiness or misery of the characters will arise.

As the discovery is a discovery of certain persons, it will sometimes happen that one person only need be discovered to the other, the other  
being



being already sufficiently known ; and sometimes both must be discovered. As in the tragedy of Iphigenia, where she is known to Orestes by sending a letter, but another method is necessary to discover him to Iphigenia.

To these two parts of tragedy, peripetia, and discovery, must be added a third, pathos [A]. The pathos is that part of the action which is either fatal or painful ; such as deaths exhibited on the stage, or tortures, or wounds, or other things of that nature.

[A] The word *πάθος* here signifies real corporal suffering, and not the idea we usually annex to pathos ; and in this sense I conceive Aristotle calls the Iliad pathetic, chap. xxiv.



being already sufficiently known; and sometimes both must be discovered. As in the tragedy of Iphigenia, where she is known to Orestes by sending a letter, but another method is necessary to discover him to Iphigenia.

## CHAP. XII.

## OF TRAGEDY, DIVIDED INTO ITS CONSTITUENT PARTS.

HAVING mentioned the parts of tragedy that ought to be used as general forms, we now come to the constituent parts into which it is particularly divided; which are the prologue, the episodes, or acts, the exode, and the chorus; and this last is again divided into the parode, and stasimon, which are common to all tragedies, and the commi, or the lamentations of the chorus with those on the stage, which are peculiar only to some.

The prologue is that entire part of the tragedy which precedes the parode or first entrance of the chorus.

The episode [A], or act, comprehends those entire parts of the tragedy that are between all the odes of the chorus.

The exode is all that part of the tragedy which succeeds the last ode of the chorus.

Of the choric part, the parode is the first speech of the full chorus, the stasimon is the song of the chorus without anapæsts or trochees, and the commus is the joint lamentation of the chorus and those on the stage.

These are the constituent parts into which tragedy is particularly divided. Those which it ought to use as general forms, have been mentioned before.

[A] See chapter iv. note [H].



## CHAP. XIII.

OF WHAT OUGHT TO BE ATTEMPTED IN THE ARRANGEMENT  
OF THE FABLE. AND HOW THE PROPER END OF TRAGEDY  
IS TO BE ATTAINED.

**AFTER** what has been already said, we now regularly proceed to shew what ought to be attempted, and what avoided in constructing the fable, and from whence the proper end of tragedy is derived.

As the composition of the most perfect tragedies should not be simple, but complicated, and should imitate an action capable of exciting pity and terror, (that being the peculiar character of this kind [A] of imitation,) it is evident that those who are represented as falling from happiness to misery, should not be persons of extraordinary virtue, as that would excite disgust, rather than pity or terror. Neither should vicious characters be shewn as rising from misery to happiness, for that would be directly opposite to the design of tragedy, not possessing any one of its requisites, being neither agreeable to our feelings, nor exciting either pity or terror. Neither should a very bad man be represented as falling from happiness to misery; for though such an arrangement might be agreeable to our feelings, it would excite neither pity nor terror; for one of these passions is excited by the misfortunes of an innocent [B] person,

[A] The complicated tragedy, possessing discovery, and peripetia. So chapter xi.  
ἡ γὰρ τοιαύτη ἀγνώρισις καὶ περιπέτεια, ἥ ἔλεον ἔξει ἢ φόβον.

[B] Intentionally innocent in regard to the crime or misfortune for which he suffers, as was the case with Œdipus.

the



the other by the misfortunes of a person in the same situation with ourselves, pity, on account of the distress being undeserved, and terror from the equality; such an event would, therefore, be neither distressful nor alarming. The character that remains, is the medium between these: a man neither eminently conspicuous for virtue and justice, nor reduced to misery by wickedness and villainy; but rather one in high reputation and prosperity, suffering through some human frailty, like *Œdipus* and *Thyestes*, and other illustrious men of such families.

A fable properly constructed should rather be simple [c] than double, (though the latter is preferred by some,) and the change should not be from misery to happiness, but, on the contrary, from happiness to misery, not on account of wickedness, but from some great frailty: and it should happen to some such person as has been mentioned, or to a higher character, rather than an inferior. And this is confirmed by experience; for formerly the poets took any casual fables without consideration [d], but now the subjects of the best tragedies are taken from a few families, as those of *Alcmæon*, of *Œdipus*, of *Meleager*, of *Thyestes*, of *Telephus*, and of such others as have either acted or suffered any thing terrible.

[c] At first sight, Aristotle seems to contradict his preceding assertion; see note [A] on this chapter: but here *ἀπλός* is opposed to *διπλός*, and there to *πεπλεγμένος*.

[d] Heinſius proposes to change the word *ἀπειρίθμεν*, which stands in the text, for *ἀπερίθμεν*. But the common reading is defended by Winstanley, the word *ἀπαριθμέω* sometimes conveying the idea of rashness or inconsideration; as in *Isocrates*, *ὅταν ἀναγινώσκη τις τὸν λόγον, ἀπιθάνως καὶ μὴδὲν ἥθος σημηνάμενος, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἀπαρίθμων*.



This being the most perfect form of tragedy, according to the principles of the art, those who blame Euripides because he pursues this method, and makes his tragedies end with distress, are themselves wrong, that system being, as we have already observed, right; the greatest proof of which is, that such dramas appear most tragical on the stage, and in the dramatic contests, if they are well managed; and Euripides, if he does not conduct his fable so well in other circumstances, is allowed to be the most tragical of our poets.

The second form, (which is esteemed the first by some,) is that which has a double composition, like the *Odyssæy*, having a different catastrophe for the virtuous and vicious. This form appears to be the first from the weakness of the spectators, which the poets are induced to follow, and compose their plays to gratify the feelings of the audience. But the satisfaction attained by these means, is not that which should properly be expected from tragedy, but rather what belongs to comedy, for there, though the characters according to the fable, are as implacable enemies as *Orestes* and *Ægisthus*, they must go out reconciled at the end of the play, and no person must be killed by another.



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 and in the dramatic contests, if they are well managed; and Euripides

#### HOW PITY AND TERROR ARE TO BE EXCITED.

**PITY** and terror may either be caused by the representation, or pro-  
 duced by the combination of the incidents; but the last is preferable,  
 and shews superior skill in the poet. For the fable ought to be so con-  
 stituted, that a person only hearing the incidents related, should both  
 shudder and be affected with compassion; which any person must feel  
 who were to hear the story of *Cædipus*. But to effect this by means  
 of the representation only, is very unskillful, and requires the assistance  
 of the manager of the theatre. Those who produce what is monstrous,  
 instead of what is terrible by the representation, have none of the pro-  
 perties of tragedy; for every sort of entertainment should not be sought  
 from it, but only that which is peculiar to it. Since then it is the  
 business of the tragic poet by imitation to afford that pleasure which  
 may arise from the passions of pity and terror, it is evident this ought  
 to be effected by the incidents themselves. We will consider, there-  
 fore, what circumstances will appear dreadful, and what lamentable.

Actions of this sort, must either happen between friends, or enemies,  
 or indifferent persons. Now, if one enemy kills another, no pity is  
 excited, either while the action is performed, or while it is meditated,  
 except what arises from the suffering of the person. It is the same  
 between those who are indifferent to each other. But distresses that  
 happen between those who are dear to each other are proper objects  
 of the poet's search; as when a brother kills, or intends to kill, or



otherwise injures his brother, or a son his father or mother, or a mother her son; therefore, it not being allowable essentially [A] to alter stories that have been generally received, but, for example Clytemnestra must be killed by Orestes, and Eriphyle by Alcæon, it is the duty of the poet to find out such traditional stories, and employ them skilfully.

I will explain more clearly what I mean by skilfully. Actions may either be represented according to the practice of the earlier poets, as performed by persons knowingly and intentionally, like Medea destroying her children in the tragedy of Euripides; or some atrocious deed may be done by a person not knowing what he does, and the relation of the characters may be discovered afterwards; as in the *Œdipus* of Sophocles. There indeed the deed is performed previously to the opening of the drama; but it may happen in the course of the tragedy itself, as in the Alcæon of Aëtydamus, and the character of Telegonus in the *Ulysses Wounded*. To these a third method may be added, where a person on the point of committing some shocking action through ignorance, makes the discovery before he does it. And there is no other method except these, for a person must either act, or not act, and must either know, or be ignorant of, the consequences of the action; but of these forms, a person going to act, knowing the consequences, and then not acting, is so much the worst, (being disgusting [B], and not tragical as no one suffers,) that a very few instances excepted, as, for example, the intention of Hæmon to kill Creon, in the tragedy of *Antigone*, it has never been used [C]. Next to this is the perpetration of the deed.

[A] λυῖν, dissolve, entirely destroy, by altering the principal incident on which the whole interest depends. See the commentary.

[B] Μισαρόν. From the deliberate guilty intention.

[C] The first of the three admissible modes according to their enumeration by Aristotle, though the lowest in point of excellence. See the commentary.

It



It is still better when the deed is performed ignorantly, and the discovery made afterwards; for there will be no wicked intention, and the discovery will be very affecting. But the last method has the most powerful effect [D], as in the tragedy of Cresphontes, Merope, being on the point of killing her son, discovers who he is, and saves his life; and, in the same manner, in the tragedy of Iphigenia, the sister discovers her brother, and, in the tragedy of Helle, the son knows his mother just as he is going to deliver her up.

And this is the reason, as we observed before, why there are not many families that furnish proper subjects for tragedy. For it was not from art, but accident, that the poets learned to form their fables on such incidents, and they were obliged to have recourse to those families in which misfortunes of that nature had happened.

And this is sufficient concerning the combination of the incidents, and the necessary qualities of the fable.

[D] *κράτιστον*, most powerful, capable of producing the strongest effect, 'Cui veluti vires maximæ suppetunt ad aliquid efficiendum.' STEPH. THES.

Though Batteux says in his remarks, 'Nous avons dit la meilleure des quatre, parce qu'Aristotle propose quatre, quoiqu'il semble n'en proposer que trois,' yet Aristotle actually mentions the four, and gives examples of them all, though he says one is too bad to be admitted. *Ἡ γὰρ πρᾶξις ἀνάγκη ἢ μὴ, καὶ εἰδῶτας, ἢ μὴ εἰδῶτας.* Here the four forms are expressly mentioned: *πρᾶξις εἰδῶτας*, to act knowingly, like Medea in killing her children; *μὴ πρᾶξις εἰδῶτας*, knowing what one is about to do, not to act, like Hæmon, in his attempt to kill his father Creon; *πρᾶξις, μὴ εἰδῶτας*, to act ignorantly, as in the *Œdipus* of Sophocles; *μὴ πρᾶξις, μὴ εἰδῶτας*, not to act, though the consequence of the action is unknown; that is, to be about to act through ignorance of the relation of the person who is the object of the action, and to make the discovery in time, as in the case of Merope, of Iphigenia, and of Helle.



## CHAP. XV.

## OF THE MANNERS.

**I**N forming the manners, four things are to be attended to.

The first, and most essential is, that they should be good. We have observed before, that a poem will possess manners, when any peculiar propensity is discovered, either by the dialogue, or the action. And if that propensity is bad, the manners will be bad, if good, they will be good, and that in every condition of life. A woman or even a slave may be drawn with this excellence of character, though it is probable that a woman should be worse than a man, and that a slave should be absolutely bad.

The next requisite is being characteristic; for there is a character of courage and fierceness adapted to men which would be very improper in a woman.

The third essential is likeness [A]. There is a distinction between this, and what we have already mentioned of their being good, and characteristic.

[A] The distinction between τὸ ὅμοιον, and τὸ ἀρμόδιον, lies in the one relating to manners in general, and the other to the manners of particular persons, as Achilles, Ulysses, &c., which should be drawn according to the received opinion. So Horace: 'Aut famam sequere' (τὸ ὅμοιον), 'aut convenientia finge' (τὸ ἀρμόδιον).



The fourth is consistency. For, even if an inconsistent person is the object of imitation, the character so imitated should be made consistently inconsistent.

We have an example of bad manners, unnecessarily introduced, in the character of Menelaus, in the tragedy of Orestes; of manners improper, and uncharacteristic, in the lamentation of Ulysses, in the tragedy of Scylla, and in the speech of Menalippe [B]; and of inconsistent manners, in the tragedy of Iphigenia in Aulis, where there is no resemblance between her supplication, and her subsequent behaviour.

Necessity and probability should be as much considered in the manners, as in the action. And it is as material to enquire whether it is necessary or probable for such a character to say or do such things, as whether it is necessary or probable for such an event to follow another.

It [c] is evident, therefore, that the unravelling of the plot should also arise from the fable itself, and not from a machine, as in the tragedy of Medea, and what relates to the return of the Greeks in the Iliad [D]. Machinery is most properly employed in those circumstances that are

[B] See note v, chap. xxv. of the commentary.

[c] I do not see the connexion of this paragraph with the rest of the chapter. It seems rather to belong to chapter xviii.

[D] Castelvetro supposes that this alludes to the Iliad, l. ii. where Minerva, by the advice of Juno, persuades Ulysses to prevent the return of the Greeks, to which they were induced by the speech of Agamemnon, and with most probability. See Mr. Twining's note. Some commentators have imagined it to relate to the lesser Iliad, or a tragedy formed from it. See the end of chapter xxiii.



out of the drama; either for the purpose of discovering such things as have happened before, which it is impossible for human knowledge to find out, or future events, which must require prophecy, and supernatural intelligence; for the gods are supposed to know every thing. It is wrong to admit any circumstance that is contrary to reason among the incidents; but if it is unavoidable, it ought to be out of the tragedy, as in the *Œdipus* of Sophocles.

As tragedy is an imitation of persons of superior excellence to those of the present time, the example of good portrait painters should be followed, who make their pictures more beautiful than the life, and yet preserve the likeness. A poet, therefore, who imitates passionate or effeminate [E] persons, or other characters of that kind, should represent them as

[E] *ῥαθύμης*. Dacier proposes to render this word wrathful, or indignant. But I should hardly think this justifiable on the sole authority of Hesychius, who, after giving the usual interpretation, adds, ἄλλοι, ἐπὶ τῷ μεγάλῃ θυμῷ κέχρηται τῇ λέξει. ‘Others use the word to express greatness of spirit.’ Terrason sur l’*Iliad*, says, ‘Ces paroles ont fort tourmentés les commentateurs, mais pour un passage d’Aristote je le trouve assez clair, et je le traduis ainsi. Il faut bien qu’un poëte qui veut représenter un homme coléré, s’en tienne à l’idée de la severité, et que voulant peindre un homme mou il lui donne les traits de la douceur, et ainsi des autres caractères; c’est de cette manière qu’Homère a rendu Achille bon. J’oppose σκληρότης severité, à ὀργίλους emportés, et ἐπιεικείας douceur, à ῥαθύμους, qui signifie mous, quoique ὀργίλους soit mit avant ῥαθύμους dans le premier membre de la phrase, et ἐπιεικείας avant σκληρότης dans le second; c’est un renversement d’ordre dont on voit bien des exemples.’ I have no doubt of this being the right interpretation, and have accordingly adopted it. As to the alteration of reading ἀγάθον instead of Ἀγάθων, the reader is referred to the commentary. The ms. in the library at Wolfenbittel, the edition of Aldus, and both those of Basil, read ἀγάθον.

examples



examples either of mildness or severity. So Achilles is drawn as a good character even by Homer [F].

These rules ought to be observed, and not only these, but such also as regard those objects of the other senses, that necessarily accompany dramatic poetry; for errors will often happen with respect to them. But these are sufficiently spoken of in treatises already published.

[F] See the commentary on this place.



## C H A P. XVI.

## OF THE DIFFERENT SPECIES OF DISCOVERY.

THE discovery having been already defined [A], we will now distinguish its different forms.

The first, which is the least artful, and to which the generality of poets in their deficiency of genius resort, is that by tokens. Of these, some are natural, like the spear which was borne by the Gegenes [B], and the stars [c] on the body of Thyestes, in the tragedy written by Carcinus; and others are adventitious, either on the body as scars, or independent of it as jewels, or like the small boat in the tragedy of Tyro. But these may be used with greater or less propriety. As, for example, Ulysses is discovered by means of a scar; but in a different manner to Euryclea [D] and the swine-herds: now, where tokens are shewn purposely to gain credit, as in the last instance, they are very artificial; but when the discovery is accidental, like that made to Euryclea, they have more merit.

[A] Chapter xi.

[B] Descendants of the earth. The name of a Theban family, supposed to be the offspring of the serpent's teeth sown by Cadmus.

[c] For *ἀσέρας*, Robertellus proposes to read *ὀσέας*, bones, as alluding to the ivory shoulder of Pelops, which Tzetzes says became a distinguishing mark to the Pelopidæ, as the spear was to the Sparti, i. e. the descendants of the sown teeth.

[D] The two discoveries mentioned, are in the *Odyssey*, books xix. and xxi.

The



The second are those which are invented by the poet, and therefore [E] inartificial. Thus in the mutual discovery of Orestes and his sister in the tragedy of Iphigenia; she is discovered by means of a letter, but he is known to [F] her, not from any circumstance arising from the fable, but from saying what the poet chose to put in his mouth; therefore this borders on the error blamed in the first mentioned species, since some [G] of the things from which the proofs are drawn might have been introduced themselves as visible tokens. The same objection may be made to the discovery by the voice of the shuttle [H], in the Tereus of Sophocles.

[E] The  $\epsilon\kappa$  before  $\alpha\tau\epsilon\chi\upsilon\omicron\iota$  is omitted in most of the mss. and oldest editions.

[F] I follow Vittorio in omitting  $\delta\iota\alpha\ \sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\acute{\iota}\omega\upsilon\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha\ \xi\upsilon$ . For the embroidery and the spear introduced by Euripides do not occasion the discovery, but are only mentioned by Orestes, to gain credit for what he had asserted.

[G] I suppose the embroidery and the spear. See the commentary. For this sense of the passage, which I believe right, I acknowledge my obligation to Mr. Twining.

[H]  $\text{Κερκίδος φωνή}$ . Scaliger conceived this to mean the imitation of the voice of a swallow, by means of a shuttle. Goulston renders it, "Radii textorii vox in tela depicta." It is impossible to determine whether the transformation of Progne into a swallow, or Philomela into a nightingale, is here hinted at as expressed by the voice of the shuttle. If we have in one epigrammatist,

$\text{Κερκίδας ὀρθρολάλοισι χελιδόσιν εἰκειλοφώνους,}$

another mentions

$\text{Κερκίδα εὔποιητόν ἀήδονα τὰν ἐν ἐρίθοις.}$

And Virgil's epithet, *Æn.* vii. v. 275, applies equally to both:

'Arguto tenues percurrens pectine telas.'

$\text{Κερκὰς}$ , according to Hesychius, is itself the name of a bird.



The third form is by recollection, either when the sight of some object causes the discovery, as in the Cyprii of Dicaeogenes, where a person bursts into tears, on seeing a picture; or as in the fable of Alcinous, Ulysses hearing the musician, and remembering the story, weeps, and is thence discovered.

The fourth is by reasoning. As, in the Coephoræ, Electra reasons thus [I]: 'A person resembling me is arrived, but no one resembles me except Orestes, therefore Orestes is arrived.' And in the tragedy of Iphigenia, written by Polyides the sophist, it is natural for Orestes to reason thus: 'My sister was sacrificed, and I am going to be sacrificed likewise.' Or as in the Tydeus of Theodectus, where it is said [κ], 'A person coming to see his son, is destroyed himself.' Or as in the Phinidæ, where, seeing the place to which they are conducted, and reasoning on the response of the oracle, they conclude they are doomed to perish there, as it is the place where they were exposed.

There is also a compound species of discovery arising from a false reasoning of the spectators. As [L] in the Ulysses Pseudangelus, where he says he

[I] In the Coephoræ of Æschylus, Electra finds some hair laid on the tomb of Agamemnon, and, from its resemblance to her own, concludes it must belong to Orestes.

[κ] Polinices, son to Œdipus, not chusing to tell his name to Adrastus, says only he is grandson to a king who was killed as he was going to consult the oracle about the fate of his son; from which Adrastus concluded he was grandson to Laius.

[L] This passage seems totally inexplicable, and is therefore, I should presume, much corrupted. The following is the remark of Batteux: 'Ulysses pretends to be one of his companions; and in that character asserts that Ulysses is dead, and that he had buried him. And, as his person is unknown, to gain credit, he says, that if they  
' will



he shall know the bow which he has never seen, and the spectator [M], reasoning falsely, supposes he is discovered by those means.

But of all modes of discovery that is the best which is derived from the incidents themselves, the surprize arising from probable means; as in the *Cædipus* of Sophocles, and the tragedy of *Iphigenia*, where it is probable she should be desirous of sending a letter. These alone depend on themselves, without the aid of fictitious tokens and jewels. And next to these, are those effected by reasoning.

will shew him the bow of Ulysses, mixed with other bows, he shall know it. They do so, he knows it, and for some time the death of Ulysses is credited; though this was too light a foundation for believing the deceit, as an impostor might learn the particular shape of Ulysses's bow from others. To this false reasoning, or paralogism, it appears a true one must have followed. As in the *Merope* of M. Voltaire, *Merope*, on seeing the helmet of her son brought in, believed the person who brought it had assassinated him; a false reasoning deceives her, and almost induces her to kill him herself, till a further discovery, by true reasoning, saves him. But I fear this ingenious explanation will hardly be found conclusive. Aristotle says the discovery is made by false reasoning; but here the deception is supposed to be made by false reasoning, and the discovery by true. Aristotle says it is made by a false reasoning of the theatre, (i. e. the spectators) *ἐκ παραλογισμῶν τῶν θεατρῶν*, and not of the persons of the drama, as is supposed in this explanation.

[M] Τὸ δὲ, i. e. θεάτρον.



## C H A P. XVII.

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON TRAGIC POETRY, AND ITS  
COMPOSITION.

**T**HE poet, as well when he composes the incidents, as when he adds the language, ought, as much as possible, to consider every thing as passing before his eyes. For then, seeing all the circumstances in the clearest light, and as if he were himself present with the actors, he will easily find out what is proper and what improper in the performance. The necessity of this is proved by the disgrace that happened to Carcinus. The absurdity of Amphiaraus going out of the temple unperceived from not seeing the dramatic effect, did not strike him; but the tragedy was condemned on the stage, the audience being offended with the impropriety.

The poet also should enter as much as possible into the spirit of the subject while he is composing; for [A] those who are moved by passions themselves, will express those passions most forcibly from their own feelings. Hence he who is really agitated storms, and he who is really angry upbraids most truly and naturally; and hence the fictions of a good poet may be said to resemble those of a madman; the ductility [B]

[A] — — Si vis me flere, dolendum est

Primum ipsi tibi. —

HOR.

[B] Stephens, in his Thesaurus, says of *εὐπλᾶτος*, ‘Exponitur etiam, “qui facile formam  
“induit?”’

of



of his fancy having the same effect on the mind of one, that real ecstasy [c] has on that of the other.

The poet when he invents his fable, should first form it generally, and afterwards insert [d] the episodes. What I mean by forming the fable generally, I will illustrate from the story of Iphigenia. 'A virgin on the point of being sacrificed, suddenly disappears, unperceived by the sacrificers, and is transported to another country, in which there is a law to offer up all strangers to a certain goddess, to whom she is appointed priestess. Some time afterwards, her brother accidentally arrives there:' (the reason of his coming being the command of an oracle, which has nothing to do with the general plan, and the cause of which is foreign to the fable.) 'He comes, is seized, and is on the point of being sacrificed, when he is discovered by his sister;' (either in the manner feigned by Euripides [e], or as, with probability,

[c] *Ἐκστατικοί*. Frantic, or as Mr. Twining excellently though paraphrastically translates it, 'transported out of ourselves.' I have ventured to render the word literally, though the figurative use of it has now almost superseded the proper, which is exactly equivalent with the common phrase 'out of his senses.' Shakespear uses it so.

'Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,  
'Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh,  
'That unmatch'd form, and feature of blown youth  
'Blasted with ecstasy.'

HAMLET.

[d] *Ἐπεισόδιον*, or *Ἐπεισόδια παρενέειπεν*.

WINSTANLEY.

[e] In the Iphigenia in Tauris of Euripides, Orestes discovers himself expressly to his sister, and is obliged to use many arguments to convince her he is her brother. This is blamed by Aristotle in the preceding chapter, (see note [f]) and the arrangement of Polyides approved.

by



by Polyides, from his saying it was not only doomed for his sister to be sacrificed, but himself also;) 'and by this circumstance he is preserved.' After this, the names are fixed, and then the episodic parts are added. But it is necessary that the episodes [F] should be connected with the fable, like the madness of Orestes, which occasions his being taken, and his safety, by means of the lustration.

In the drama, the episodes should be concise, but the epopee derives its length from them. The simple argument of the *Odyssée* is short [G]. 'A man, absent from home for many years, is detained by Neptune, and loses his companions. In the mean time, his domestic affairs are wasted by suitors to his wife, and there is a conspiracy against his son. At length, being driven on his own coast by a tempest, and discovering himself to a few friends, he attacks the suitors, is preserved himself, and destroys his enemies.' This is all the real argument, the rest is episode.

[F] Here episode has its usual sense.

[G] *Μακρὸς, not λεπτός.* The complicated



## C H A P. XVIII.

## OF THE PLOT AND ITS SOLUTION.—OF THE OFFICE OF THE CHORUS.

**A** PLOT, and its solution, are incident to every tragedy. The plot consists of all that is out of the action, and often of many things that are in it. The rest is the solution. I call every thing the plot from the beginning to that extreme part from whence the change [A] of fortune arises; and what passes from the commencement of the change of fortune to the end of the piece, the solution. For example, in the tragedy of Lynceus written by Theodectus, the plot comprehends the preceding [B] events, and the taking of the youth; and the solution, what happens from the accusation of murder to the end.

There are four species of tragedy, for such are the number of its parts that have been mentioned. The complicated, which depends entirely on peripetia and discovery. The pathetic, like the tragedies of

[A] There is a great dispute among the commentators, whether it should be εἰς εὐτυχίαν, or ἀτυχίαν. All the mss. as well as printed copies, have the first, but the principles of Aristotle seem to require the last, or both: and the Latin translation by Valla, printed in 1498, prior to any edition of the original Greek, has INFORTUNIUM; therefore we may conclude his ms. read ἀτυχία. See Winstanley's note.

[B] For πεπραγμένα, read προπεπραγμένα.—VITTORIO, WINSTANLEY. Events prior to the opening of the drama.

H

Ajax



Ajax and Ixion. The ethic, [c] like the Phthiotides, and the Peleus. And fourthly, the simple, [d] like the Phorcydes, the Prometheus, and those tragedies which represent what passes in the infernal regions. The poet should endeavour to excel in all these forms, or at least in as many as possible, and in those that are most esteemed; especially at present, when people are so ready to censure poets. For having excellent writers in each particular species, they now expect every poet to excel in them all.

The difference or sameness of one tragedy and another, must not be estimated by the fable, but by the plot and solution. There are many who form the plot well, and the solution ill, though they ought to be equally skilful in both.

It [e] is necessary to remember, as has often already been observed, not to give a tragedy the form of an epic poem. By an epic form I mean one containing many fables; as if the whole Iliad were to be comprized in one tragedy. For though on account of the length of the poem, every part there has its proper proportion, in the drama the effect would be very different from the expectation of the poet [f]. As a proof of this,

[c] I am obliged to use this word from the want of a proper English one to express the quality of a composition where manners form the leading character. MORAL has quite a different sense. See note 1, chap. vii. of the Commentary.

[d] From the recapitulation of these forms at the beginning of chapter xxiv. Winstanley proposes to supply the word ἀπλοῦν. Batteux inserts ὁμαλόν from a ms. and translates it 'simple et unie.'

[e] I entirely agree with Vittorio in the restoration of these words, Ἡ δὲ, ὥσπερ εἰρηλαί, πολλάκις, μεμῆσθαι κ. τ. λ.

[f] See Mr. Twining's note (153).



those have either totally failed in the attempt, or been unfavourably received, who have endeavoured to represent the whole destruction of Troy, and not divided it into parts; (I [G] do not mean in the manner of Æschylus, but like Euripides, in his Niobe and Medea.) And in these alone has Agatho failed; but in the tragedies that depend on the peripetia and those that have a single action [H] such poets often attain their purpose which is to produce tragic effect, and at the same time gratify our feelings, by means which appear wonderful. As, when a wife, but wicked man, like Sisyphus, is deceived; or, when a brave, but unjust man is vanquished. Neither will this be contrary to probability, since, as Agatho observes, it is probable for many things to happen which seem improbable.

The [I] chorus ought to be considered as one of the characters of the drama and be deemed a part of the whole, and contribute to the action.

[G] Batteux is of opinion that both Euripides and Æschylus are proposed here as models, and that καὶ μὴ is only a repetition of the negative, introducing the second example, and that Niobe is ascribed to Æschylus, and Medea to Euripides. But I think the construction of the Greek will hardly justify this meaning. I imagine Aristotle, having proposed chusing a part only of a story, added, lest his readers should be influenced by a bad example, that this should be done in the manner of Euripides in those tragedies, and not according to the general manner of Æschylus.

[H] Not having a different ending for the good and bad. I have considered Ἀπλόος here, as in chapter xiii to be as opposed to διπλόος. See the Commentary.

[I] ‘ Actoris partes chorus, officiumque virile

‘ Defendat, neu quid medios intercinat actus

‘ Quod non proposito conducat, et hæreat apte.’

HOR.



Yet [κ] not in the manner used by Euripides, but like Sophocles. In other poets, the parts that are [λ] sung seem to have no more relation to the fable, than to another tragedy, and from this came the custom, which originated with Agatho, of introducing songs which had no connexion with the piece [μ]. But where is the difference between introducing these unconnected songs, and fitting a speech, or whole act of one tragedy, to another?

What relates to the language and the sentiments. Here *ὁμοίως* and *ἕτερος* are exactly opposed to each other, as in the passage taken

belonging more particularly to that science; since the [λ] *ἄλλοι* and *οὗτοι* are exactly opposed to each other, as in the passage taken

[μ] *Εὐδαίμων*. These, both from this account of Aristotle, and the correspondent passage in Horace, appear to have been pieces of music performed between the acts, that were foreign to the subject of the tragedy, probably to gratify the audience, by introducing some favorite composition or performer.

only with this difference, that in the drama these effects should appear without the intertence of the poet [α]; whereas, in an oration, they must be produced by the orator, and relate from the arguments he uses; for what would be the merit of the orator, if they were to appear affecting [α] without the assistance of his eloquence.

There is one part of the theory of elocution relating to the mode of expression, which principally belongs to the player, and the poet

[α] The player may be considered here as equivalent with the poet, as in the case of the orator.

[β] From the circumstances of the story alone. See the Commentary.

[γ] The player may be considered here as equivalent with the poet, as in the case of the orator.

[δ] From the circumstances of the story alone. See the Commentary.

[ε] The player may be considered here as equivalent with the poet, as in the case of the orator.



Yet [K] not in the manner used by Euripides, but like Sophocles. In other poets, the parts that are [L] sung seem to have no more relation to the fable, than to another tragedy, and from this came the custom, which originated with Agatho, of introducing songs which had no connexion with the piece [M]. But where is the difference between introducing

these unconnected songs, and fitting a speech, or whole act of one tragedy, **H**AVING already spoken sufficiently of the other parts, it now remains to treat of the language and the sentiments. What relates to the sentiments indeed may rather be referred to the principles of rhetoric, as belonging more particularly to that science; since the sentiments comprehend whatever may be effected by means of speech; the different offices of which are to demonstrate, to refute, to excite the passions such as fear, anger, and pity, and to amplify, or extenuate. But it is evident that in the composition of a fable [A] the same forms must be used, when it is necessary to represent things lamentable, terrible, great, or probable; only with this difference, that in the drama these effects should appear without the interference of the poet [B]; whereas, in an oration, they must be produced by the orator, and result from the arguments he uses; for what would be the merit of the orator, if they were to appear affecting [C] without the assistance of his eloquence.

There is one part of the theory of elocution relating to the mode of expression, which principally belongs to the player, and the professed

[A] Πράγμασι may be considered here as equivalent with τῇ τῶν πραγμάτων συστάσει.

[B] From the circumstances of the story alone. 'Senza che si dica e che s'insegni che sian tali.' PICCOLOMINI.

[C] Ἠδία, ψυχαγωγικά. See the Commentary.



teachers of that art. Such as to distinguish between supplication, command, narration, question, answer, and any other circumstances of the same kind. For no blame, worthy of notice, can be imputed to the poetry, from knowledge or ignorance of these things. Since who can conceive that to be an error of the poet which Protagoras censures, when he asserts, that instead of entreating as he intended, he commands, by saying,

‘ Achilles’ wrath, O heavenly goddess, sing ;’ IL. I.

because, to bid a person do, or not do, a thing, is to command. This, therefore, I shall omit, as belonging to another art, and not to poetry.



## C H A P. XX.

## OF THE PARTS OF LANGUAGE.

**L**ANGUAGE in general is divided into these [A] parts. Element or letter, syllable, connective particle, name or noun, word or verb, article, case, and sentence.

A letter is an undivided sound, yet not of any sort, but of that only, from which an intelligible sound may be formed: for though the sounds made by beasts are undivided, none of them can be called a letter. Letters are divided into vowels, semivowels, and mutes. A vowel has a distinct sound independent of articulation [B], as A, or O. A semivowel has a sound with articulation, as S, or R. A mute has articulation, but no sound of itself, without being joined to some letter that has a sound, as G, or D. Letters further differ from each other, by the

[A] 'According to Aristotle, the parts of speech are four. The article, name, verb, and connective. This is not so inaccurate as it may seem at first sight to be: for we may suppose that to the name he refers both the noun, and its representative the pronoun; to the verb, (or attribute) the adjective, participle, verb, (strictly so called,) and adverb, and consequently the interjection; and to the connective, both the conjunction, and preposition.'—BEATTIE'S Theory of Language, near the end.

[B] Dacier reads *προσβολῆς*, and renders it 'by adding' (i. e. a vowel). The same translation is found in the Spanish version of Ordonez, corrected by Florez, though the usual reading is preserved in the text. But I cannot reconcile this definition of a mute with its distinction from a semivowel. *Προσβολῆ* means here the allision of the tongue against the various parts of the mouth; in the formation of letters.

form



form of the mouth, the different [c] organs of pronunciation by aspiration or softness, by length or brevity, and by acuteness, gravity, or the medium between both: all which circumstances are rather the objects of metrical treatises.

A syllable is composed of a mute and a letter that has a sound. G and R, without the addition of A, do [D] not form a syllable, but [E] with the addition of A they do, as GRA. But the investigation of these distinctions belongs likewise to the art of verification.

A [F] connective particle is a sound without meaning, which does not, when placed among many sounds, affect the signification of any single one of them; and whose nature it is to be placed either at the extremi-

[C] I think Goulston right, who supposes Aristotle to mean by τόποις the different organs of speech, from which letters receive the several denominations of nasal, dental, labial, &c. Heinsius reads τύποις.

[D] The sense calling for a negative, which Robertellus says is authorized by a MS. I have admitted it, though the exclusion of it seems most agreeable with the context, as Aristotle defines a syllable to be composed ἐξ ἀφώνου, καὶ φωνῆν ἔχοντος, 'of a mute and a letter having a sound.' Now, he describes a semivowel as having sound with articulation, as a vowel has without, τὸ μετὰ προσβολῆς ἔχων φωνῆν ἀκουσὴν. Had Aristotle meant to define a syllable according to the notion followed in the alteration, (and which I have been obliged to adopt as the least of two difficulties, as I cannot conceive how GR can be called a syllable,) he should have described it to be, ἐξ ἀφώνου, ἢ ἡμιφώνου, καὶ φωνήεντος, compounded of a mute or semivowel, and a vowel.

[E] Ἀλλὰ μετὰ τῷ A.—MS. quoted by Robertellus.

[F] I have endeavoured to give the clearest sense I could of this difficult passage, following the reading proposed by Winstanley in this and the succeeding paragraph.

ties,



ties, or in the middle of a sentence, unless it requires to be placed by itself at the beginning [G], as THEREFORE, CERTAINLY, INDEED. Or, in other words, it is a sound without meaning itself, whose property it is to form one sense [H] from many intelligible sounds.

An article is an unmeaning sound, which marks the beginning, the end, or some particular distinction of a sentence; as [I] Τὸ φημί, or Τὰ περὶ, or Τὰ ἄλλα. Or, in other words, it is a sound without meaning itself, which does not affect the signification of any one sound among many, and whose nature it is to be placed either at the extremities, or in the middle of a sentence.

A noun is a compounded sound, having signification, but not marking time, and whose parts, taken by themselves, have no meaning. For even in names composed of two words, we never conceive either of the parts, taken separately, to have any meaning; as, in the name Theodorus, DORUS [K] has no meaning.

[G] I do not see how this definition agrees with the Greek examples, μὲν, ἤτοι, δὲ, except, as Cooke supposes, we are to understand it as meant of the beginning of the sense, and not the words of the sentence.

[I] Σημαντικὴν φωνήν.

[I] I have retained the Greek examples; for similar instances in our own language the reader is referred to the Commentary.

[K] Theodorus is compounded of two Greek words Θεός, God, and δῶρον, a gift. I do not know why Aristotle confined his observation to δῶρον since it is equally applicable to the other word. In our own language the name of Shakespear is exactly a similar example.



A verb is a compounded significant sound, marking time; the parts of which, as in the noun, have no signification in themselves. MAN, and WHITE, do not specify time; but HE WALKS, and HE WALKED, do, one a present, the other a past time.

A case is incident both to the noun and the verb, and either marks such relations as OF, or FROM, or TO, a thing; or shews the number, whether it be one, or many, as MAN, or MEN; or marks whether the intention of the speaker is to question or order. DID HE GO? or GO, may be considered as a species of case incident to verbs.

A sentence or discourse is a compounded, significant sound, some parts of which have meaning by themselves. It [L] is allowed there may be a sentence without a verb, for every sentence is not composed both of verbs and nouns; as, for instance, the definition [M] of a man. Yet, some part of it has always signification, as the name Cleon, in the sentence CLEON WALKED. The unity of a sentence or discourse arises from two causes; either from having one signification, or from being joined by a number of connective particles. Thus the Iliad possesses unity by means of connective particles, and the definition of a man, by having one signification.

[L] I have hazarded a transposition of the text, as giving a clearer sense. Ἀλλ' ἐνδεχέσθαι  
ἀνθρώπων ὀρισμός.

[M] A terrestrial animal with two feet. Σῶον πεζὸν δίπεν. Aristot. περὶ Ἑρμηνείας.



## C H A P. XXI.

## OF NOUNS OR NAMES.

**NOUNS** are either simple, (by simple, I mean not composed of significant sounds,) or compounded. And of these last, some are composed partly of significant, and partly of unmeaning sounds, and some entirely of significant sounds. Others, again, are trebly and quadruply compounded, like many of the words used by the dithyrambic [A] poets, as, for instance, Hermocaïcoxanthus.

Nouns are either proper or foreign [B], or metaphorical, or ornamental, or invented for the purpose, or lengthened, or shortened, or changed.

I call that a proper name, which is in general use; and that a foreign one, which is used by strangers. The same word may, therefore, be

[A] Μεγαλειῶν. This word has perplexed all the commentators. Harles says, "It strikes me that it should be μέγα λαλέων, i. e. of those who compose dithyrambs. Or perhaps Aristotle alludes to some kind of Arcadian verse, at that time sung by the Megapolitans, in which Hermocaïcoxanthus occurred, composed of Ἑρμος, Καῖκος, and Ξάνθος, (which are the names of three rivers in Asia) and therefore he wrote Μεγαλοπολιῶν." I have adopted the first idea. See the Commentary.

[B] The Γλῶττα, which, for want of a better word, I translate foreign, must not be considered in the same light with our introduction of pure French and Italian words into our compositions, than which nothing can be more affected and inelegant. It consisted in transferring a word from one of the Greek dialects to another.



both proper and foreign though not to the same people; as the word  $\Sigma\acute{\iota}\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\alpha\varsigma$  [c] is proper to the Cyprians, and foreign to us.

A metaphor [d] is the transposition of a word to an unusual signification, either from the genus to the species, or from the species to the genus, or from one species to another, or according to analogy. I call from genus to species such an instance as this:

‘There is my vessel station’d.’ *ODYSSEY, L. I.*

For to be moored is a species of being stationed.

From species to genus, such as

‘Ten thousand glorious acts

‘Ulysses has achiev’d’— *ILLIAD, L. II.*

For ten thousand is a great number, and is now in general use to express many. From one species to another as in these instances

[E] ‘The brazen falchion drew away his life.’

[c] A dart made entirely of steel.

[d] In the words of Mr. Harris: ‘A metaphor is the transferring of a word from its usual meaning to an analogous one, and then employing it according to that transfer.’ *PHILOGICAL ENQUIRIES, part ii, chapter x.*

[E] So in Virgil,

—‘Ferit eminus hasta,

‘Vocem animamque rapit trajecto gutture.’—

And



And both proper and foreign though not to the same people as the word  
[F] 'Cut by the ruthless sword.'

Where, to draw away, and to cut, are used alternately for each other, each being a species of taking something away. And I call it by analogy, when the second term having the same relation to the first that the fourth has to the third, the fourth is used instead of the second, and the second instead of the fourth; and sometimes what has only analogy [G] to a thing, is used for what it really is. As a cup has the same relation to Bacchus, that a shield has to Mars, a shield may be called the cup of Mars, and a cup the shield of Bacchus. Evening has the same relation to day, that old-age has to life; therefore evening may be called the old-age of day, and old-age the evening of life, or, as it is styled by Empedocles, 'the setting of life.' In some instances, even where there is no analogous name, the same method may be employed: to scatter grain, is called to sow; but there is no name for the sun's scattering his beams, and yet that has the same analogy to the sun, that sowing has to grain. Hence the expression of the Poet,

[H] 'Sowing abroad his heaven-created fire.'

[F] Winstanley proposes, instead of *τάμνει ἀτρεΐ χαλκῷ*, to read *τάμει νηλεΐ χαλκῷ*, which is the end of a line in Homer. IL. III. v. 292.

[G] I am not satisfied with my own, or any other interpretation of this passage, of which Heinsius says, 'Certum est, non esse locum qui magis fatigavit interpretes.' Batteux translates it, 'Quelques fois même, on met simplement le mot analogique, au lieu du mot propre.' Winstanley, with his usual happiness of conjecture, proposes to read, *καὶ ἐνίοτε προσθήσασιν ἀνθ' ἧς λέγει πρὸς ὃ ἐστὶν ἈΝΑΛΟΓΟΝ, οἶον κ. τ. λ.*

[H] —Et lumine conferit arva—LUCRETIVS.



This sort of metaphor may be used in a different manner, by adding some circumstances that belong to another thing, and denying part of what belongs to itself. As if a shield should be called

The wineless cup of Mars. [1]

An invented name is an appellation given to a thing by the poet which was not before in general use. The substituting *Ἐρυσταί* [κ] instead of *Κέρατα*, for HORNS, and calling a PRIEST *Ἀρητήρ*, instead of *Ἱερεύς*, seem to come under this description.

A word is lengthened, or shortened, either by using a long vowel instead of a short one, or by inserting an additional syllable; or on the other hand by taking any thing away either from the word itself, or the additional syllable. *Πόλῃος* for *Πόλεος*, and *Πηληϊάδεω* for *Πηλεΐδε*, are lengthened names, and such as *κρί* [L] *δῶ*, or *ὄψ* as in this example,

*Μία γίνεσθαι ἀμφοτέρων ὄψ*,

are shortened ones.

[1] This emendation is proposed by Winstanley, *εἰ τὴν ἀσπίδα εἶποι φιάλην ΜΕΝ Ἀρεως, ἀλλ' ΑΟΙΝΟΝ*. And this agrees with what Aristotle has just observed. The saying 'the cup of Mars,' is adding a circumstance that belongs to another thing, *τὸ ἀλλότριον προσυγρεύσας*, and joining to it the epithet 'wineless,' is denying something that belongs to itself, *τῶν οἰκείων τι ἀποφῆσαι*. This daring metaphor, 'audacissimum metaphoræ exemplum,' Harles says, is supposed to be taken from Theognis the dithyrambic poet.

[κ] *Ἐρυσταί* is derived from *ἔρνη*, which, according to Hesychius, signifies BUDS, or SCIONS. *Ἀρητήρ* is from *ἀράομαι*, TO PRAY.

[L] For *κρίθη*, *δῶμα*, and *ὄψις*.

A noun



A noun is changed when part of it is in its original state and part the invention of the poet, as  $\Delta\epsilon\zeta\eta\epsilon\rho\delta\upsilon$  instead of  $\Delta\epsilon\zeta\iota\delta\upsilon$  [M].

Nouns also are either masculine, feminine, or neuter. The masculine end either in N or P, or in one of those letters that are compounded of mutes [N], which are two, viz.  $\Psi$  or  $\Xi$ . The feminine end in the long vowels H or  $\Omega$ , or in long A. So the number of terminations for masculine and feminine are equal, the terminations of  $\Psi$  and  $\Xi$  being the same [O]. No noun ends in a mute or short vowel, and only three in I, viz.  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\iota$ ,  $\kappa\acute{o}\mu\mu\iota$ , and  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho\iota$ ; and five in  $\Upsilon$ , viz.  $\pi\acute{\omega}\tilde{\upsilon}$ ,  $\nu\acute{\alpha}\pi\upsilon$ ,  $\gamma\acute{o}\nu\upsilon$   $\delta\acute{o}\rho\upsilon$ , and  $\acute{\alpha}\zeta\upsilon$ . The neuter end either in these vowels, or in N and  $\Sigma$  [P].

[M] Does not this seem equivalent to the lengthened word?

[N] Of the mutes  $\pi$  and  $\kappa$ , and the semivowel  $\sigma$ .

[O] Both ending in  $\sigma$ .

[P] Heinsius justly observes that this passage must be greatly corrupted. The best emendation of it is in Winstanley's notes, of which this is the substance. 'The masculine end in  $\nu$ ,  $\rho$ , or  $\sigma$ , and its compounds, which are two,  $\psi$ , and  $\xi$ . The feminine end in the vowels that are always long, and long  $\alpha$ ; therefore the masculine and feminine happen to be equal in number, as  $\psi$ ,  $\xi$ , and  $\sigma$ , are the same. No noun ends with a mute or short vowel, three only in  $\iota$ , and five in  $\upsilon$ . The neuter end in these vowels, and in  $\nu$ ,  $\sigma$ , or  $\rho$ .



## C H A P. XXII.

## OF THE EXCELLENCE OF LANGUAGE.

**T**HE perfection of language consists in being perspicuous and yet not mean. Language is most perspicuous when it consists entirely of words taken in their usual sense, but then it will be mean; examples of which may be drawn from the poetry of Cleophon and Sthenelus. It will have more dignity, and be further removed from the vulgar idiom, by the use of uncommon words; by uncommon words I mean the foreign, the metaphorical, the lengthened, and all except those in common use. But were a poem to be entirely composed of these, it would be either an enigma, or a continued barbarism. If chiefly composed of metaphors, it would be an enigma, and if of foreign words, a barbarism. For the property of an enigma is to make those circumstances that really belong to a thing, have the appearance of impossibility, which cannot result from the arrangement of the words [A] alone, but must be effected by metaphors. As [B], 'I saw one man glewing brags to another man

[A] Heinsius proposes to read τὴν τῶν κυρίων ὀνομάτων σύνθεσιν, making the opposition between common names and metaphors.

[B] The whole enigma is preserved by Athenæus:

Ἀνρ' εἶδον πυρὶ χαλκὸν ἐπ' ἀνερὶ κολλίσαντα,

οὕτω συνκόλλως ὥσε' σὺναιμα ποῖειν.

'I saw a man glewing brags to another man by means of fire, and so glewing, that the same blood flowed through both.' This alludes to the operation of cupping, which the ancients performed with brazen cups.

' with



“ with fire,” and others of the same kind. But a barbarism is occasioned by the use of foreign words. Therefore these modes of expression should be tempered with common ones; for then, while the foreign words, the metaphors, the ornamented phrases, and the other species that have been mentioned, hinder the language from being vulgar and mean, the proper names give it perspicuity.

The lengthening, shortening, and changing of names, contribute not a little to make the language elevated, and yet perspicuous. The expressions, being different from those in common use, distinguish it from the vulgar idiom; and yet its near resemblance to what is generally spoken, renders it perspicuous. Those, therefore, do not find fault with justice, who blame this mode of speech, and, like the elder Euclides, ridicule the poet for the ease there must be in composing verse, if it were permitted to lengthen the quantity of syllables at pleasure, making iambic [c] verses even in common discourse. The examples he produces are,

Ἡτὶ Χάριν εἶδον Μαραθῶνα βαδίζοντα.

and

[c] This passage has been very perplexing to the critics. The Greek examples not being reducible to any species of verse, some correct them to make them iambs. Others, because no syllable appears altered or lengthened, supply the alteration themselves, as is done by Hein-  
sius; he also alters the context very much, adding, after the word *ἐκτείνειν*, the words *ἢ ἐξαλλάττειν*, and reading, instead of *ἱαμβοποιήσας*, *ἄμφω ποιήσας*, making this the sense of Aristotle: ‘ Though Euclides said it would be easy to make verses, if any word might  
‘ be lengthened or changed at pleasure, yet he himself has done both, even in prose, as in  
‘ these examples.’ But I confess I see no reason for altering one word of the original, as it now stands, from which I think a clear sense may be deduced, without pretending to deserve the compliment promised by Hein-  
sius, of being ‘ vates optimus.’ Euclides objects, that if a poet may lengthen what syllables he chuses, the composition of verse would be so easy, that

Κ

iambs



and

Οὐκ ἀν' γενόμενος τὸν ἐκεῖν ἐξ ἑλλέβορον.

Indeed, it is apparent how ridiculous such an abuse of this license must be, but moderation [D] is equally required in the use of all the other parts. An absurd and ridiculous use of metaphors, foreign words, and other forms of that sort, would have the same effect; and yet we may see how advantageous a proper use of them is in epic poetry, by first putting the words in verse, and then if any person should afterwards substitute ordinary expressions for the foreign names, metaphors, and the other forms, he will perceive the truth of our assertion. Euripides and Æschylus both wrote an iambic verse the same in every respect, excepting a

iambics might be made even in common conversation; which is just equivalent with an Englishman's saying, that if a poet might accent what syllables he pleased, he might make blank verse in common conversation. And if, to illustrate this, he were to quote the following line of Milton,

' To the garden of blifs, thy seat prepared,'

surely the propriety of the quotation could not be questioned, because it was not verse, without a vicious pronunciation; since the illustration arises from accenting syllables that should not be accented, as in the Greek, from pronouncing syllables long, which are really short. See the commentary.

[D] Τὸ δὲ μέτρον. I have some doubts if this should not be rendered, ' Since metre is essential to all the parts (i. e. of versification).' And that Aristotle, meaning to censure the hypercriticism of Euclides, having mentioned his objection to the arbitrary lengthening of syllables, his opinion of the subsequent ease of versification, and his absurd examples, adds, ' But to use the license in this way, would be ridiculous, quantity (measure, μέτρον) being a common essential to all kinds of verse.' And thus blames Euclides for censuring the use of a license, from the possibility of a ridiculous abuse of it. Τὸ μέτρον is employed in this sense in the next sentence, and indeed is never used in any other in the course of the poetic, though it occurs so often.

single



single word, which being altered from the accustomed common form to a foreign one, caused one verse to appear beautiful and the other mean.

Æschylus, in his *Philoctetes*, writes,

‘Lo! on my foot a wasting ulcer feeds!’

The other substitutes for *ἔσθιει*, the common Greek word for FEEDS, or EATS, the word *θωνάται* which is foreign and unusual. What would be the effect, if, in this verse of Homer,

‘Not this weak pigmy wretch of mean design,’ *Od. ix.*

we should insert the common words LITTLE and VILE; or, in this verse, for

‘A tripod table, and ignobler feat,’ *Od. xx.*

we should say

‘A three-foot table, and a lower seat:’

or, instead of

‘The distant rocks re-bellow to the roar,’ *Il. xvii.*

we should say

‘resounded with the noise.’

Ariphrades also ridicules the tragic poets, for employing forms of language that are not used in common conversation, and inverting [E]

[E] I have left out the examples, as they are peculiar to the Greek language. Their import will be clearly suggested to the English reader, by such modes of expression as ‘wrath divine’ for ‘divine wrath,’ and ‘his power confess’d’ for ‘confess’d his power.’ See the commentary.



the order of the words, though their differing from common use is the very circumstance that elevates the style. But of this he was ignorant.

There is great merit in using all the forms we have mentioned with propriety; such as compounded and foreign words. But the greatest art is to be happy in forming metaphors; for that alone cannot be acquired from others, but is itself a proof of good natural genius; since to form metaphors well, is to observe the similitude of things.

Compounded words suit best with dithyrambic, foreign words with heroic, and metaphors with iambic verse. Indeed, all that have been mentioned may be used in heroic verse; but for iambics, which are chiefly an imitation of common discourse, such words are most calculated which may be used in conversation, as the proper, the metaphorical, and the ornamental.

This is sufficient concerning tragedy, and dramatic imitation.



## C H A P. XXIII.

## OF EPIC POETRY.

AS to imitations that are solely produced by narration and verse [A], it is evident that even there, as in tragedy, the fables should have a dramatic form, and relate to one entire and complete action, that has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and which, like one perfect animal, should produce its peculiar delight; and not follow the custom of history, where it is not necessary to confine the subject to one action, but to one period of time; and where every thing may be introduced that happened in that time, whether relating to one or more persons, however casual their connexion may be [B]. For as the sea-fight at Salamis, and the battle with the Carthagenians in Sicily, though they happened at the same [C] time, by no means conducted to the same end; so also even in progressive time events may sometimes be connected [D], and yet no particular common consequence may arise from them.

[A] Certainly hexameter verse. Nevertheless *ἐν μέτρῳ* is not put here *κατ' ἐξοχὴν* for hexameter verse, but to distinguish the epopee as using verse only unassisted by music, apparatus, &c. So Goulston, 'SOLO imitatur metro.' See note [F] chapter xxvi. as also note ii. of the commentary on the same chapter.

[B] See Beattie on Imagination, chapter xi. sect. 1. page 86, note.

[C] Herodotus says the victory obtained by Gelo over the Carthagenians happened the same day with the battle of Salamis; but Diodorus Siculus, on the same day with the battle of Thermopylæ.

[D] *Θάτερον μετὰ θατέρῳ*. 'Interpreters have followed one another in rendering this 'passage SIT UNUS POST ALTERUM. This construction must be erroneous, since *μετὰ* 'with a genitive, signifies "in conjunction with." Monthly Review on Cooke's edition of the Poetic, July, 1787. See the commentary.

This



This manner is nevertheless adopted by the generality of poets: therefore even in this respect, Homer, as we [E] have before observed, when compared with all other writers, may almost seem inspired. He did not even attempt to include the whole Trojan war, though it had a beginning and an end. For it either would have been so large as not to be easily comprehended in one view; or, if it had been reduced to a moderate size, it would have been confused from the number of incidents. Taking, therefore, only one part for his subject, he introduces abundance of episodes from the other parts. Such as the catalogue of the ships, and the other episodes, with which he has adorned his poem. While other poets, like the authors of the Cypriacs [F], and the lesser Iliad, are satisfied if they confine themselves to one person, one period of time, or one action, though it may have many parts. Not more than one, or two tragedies at the most, could be formed either from the Iliad or the Odyssey. But many might from the Cypriacs; and from the lesser Iliad more than eight. As the Judgment of the arms, Philoctetes, Neoptolemus, Eurypylus, the Ptochia [G], the Lacænæ, the Destruction of Troy, the Return of the Greeks, Sinon, and the Troades.

[E] See chapter iv.

[F] That this poem had been attributed to Homer, so early as the time of Herodotus, is evident from that historian's contradicting the opinion. Κατὰ ταῦτα δὲ τὰ ἔπη, καὶ τόδε τὸ χωρίον οὐκ ἦναι ἀλλὰ μάλιστα δηλοῖ ὅτι οὐκ Ὁμήρου τὰ Κύπρια ἔπη εἰσι ἀλλ' ἄλλος τις. 'From these words, and the mention of the country, it is very clear that the Cyprian verses are not the work of Homer, but of some other person.'

[G] Πτωχεία, poverty. Perhaps Ulysses going as a spy to Troy, disguised in a mean habit. See Odyssey, l. ii. ver. 245, of the original; ver. 336 of Pope. Mr. Twining observes, that what in Homer signifies VAGRANT or BEGGAR, Pope has rendered slave. But Pope is undoubtedly right, for the word in the original is οἰκῆ, explained by the Scholiast οἰκῆτη δέσφ.

Why may not this as probably allude to the disguise of Ulysses on his return to Ithaca?

C H A P.



## C H A P. XXIV.

## OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EPOPEE AND TRAGEDY.

THE [A] species also of the epopee are the same with those of tragedy. For it must be either simple, complicated, ethic [B], or pathetic. The parts also are the same, except the music and the scenery. It should have peripetia, discovery, and pathos. The language also and sentiments should be well constructed. All of these Homer used both with superior excellence [C] and propriety. For he formed his poems in such a manner, as to give examples of them all [D]. The Iliad is simple and pathetic; the Odyssey complicated, (having discoveries throughout the whole,) and full of characteristic manners. And beside this, in his language and sentiments he was unequalled.

But the epopee differs from tragedy in the length of the composition and the nature of the verse. Its proper length has been mentioned already; there should be a possibility of comprehending the beginning and end in one view, and this would be attained if they were a little shorter than the compositions of the earlier poets, and reduced to the same length with the number of tragedies that are performed at one time.

[A] See chapter xviii.

[B] See chapter xviii. note [c].

[C] I conceive *πρῶτος* here to mean first in point of excellence, not time.

[D] I have ventured a slight degree of paraphrase, as it renders the sense of the whole passage more clear.



The epopee possesses a property peculiar to itself, which contributes greatly to augment its length. For it is not in the power of tragedy to represent a variety of actions that happen at the same time, but only that individual one which then occupies the scene, and which the performers are in the act of representing. But the epopee, being a narration, may introduce many cotemporary incidents relative to the principal subject, which will encrease the bulk of the poem, so that it will not only receive the advantage of superior magnificence, but the poet will be able to transport the hearer from place to place [E], and give variety to his work by a number of different episodes: whereas the sameness of events, soon producing satiety, has occasioned the failure of many tragedies.

The choice of heroic verse has been confirmed by experience; for if a narrative imitation were to be attempted in any other sort of verse, or in many sorts mixed, the impropriety would be apparent. The heroic measure excels every other kind in dignity and elevation; on which account it is most capable of receiving foreign and metaphorical expressions. For narrative imitation is, above all others, complete [F] in itself, but iambics and tetrameters require the assistance of movement, the one by means of dancers, the other by actors: it would be very absurd therefore to mix them together, as was done by Chæremon [G]. For

[E] Μετάβαλλεν τὸν ἀκούοντα. Aristotle uses this verb in the same sense in his History of Animals, l. viii. Μεταβάλλοισι γὰρ ἐκ τῶν Σκυθικῶν εἰς τὰ ἔλη τὰ ἄνω τῆς Αἰγύπτου.

[F] Περιττὴ, full, complete. Because it effects its end purely by itself. This must be the sense in which Aristotle uses the word, as he afterwards, on the whole, gives the preference to tragedy.

[G] See chapter i. note [c] towards the end.

these



these reasons. No long composition has been attempted in any other verse except the heroic, nature herself, as we have before observed [H], pointing out that as the most proper.

As Homer is admirable in many other things, so he is particularly excellent in being the only poet who was not ignorant how far he ought to act himself. The poet should appear himself as little as possible, for whenever he speaks in his own person, he ceases to be an imitator. Other poets shew themselves through the whole poem, and only imitate a few things, and that seldom; but Homer, after a short introduction, immediately introduces a man or a woman, or some other agent that is distinguished by manners; for he produces no agent without characteristic manners.

Though wonder ought to be excited by tragedy, yet things [I] contrary to reason, which excite wonder in the highest degree, are better admitted in the epopee, from the action not being placed before the eyes. In the pursuit of Hector, the circumstance of the Greeks standing still and not following, and Achilles making signs for them not to engage, would appear ridiculous in the representation; but in the epopee the absurdity is concealed. In general, whatever is wonderful is pleasing; as a proof of which, whoever relates any fact is apt to add something marvellous to gratify the hearers.

Homer also was the best instructor how to introduce specious fallacies by means of false reasoning [K]. (Men naturally imagine, when certain consequences

[H] Chapter iv. near the end.

[I] ἄλογον, δι' ὁ. — VITTORIO.

[K] As the literal construction of the original gives no rational meaning, and as the emendations of the commentators are not much happier, I have hazarded a conjectural explanation



consequences always follow, or accompany certain events, that when those consequences happen, those causes must have happened also; and here lies the fallacy; the first proposition may be false, though if it were otherwise the event is such as might naturally produce those consequences; knowing therefore the consequences to be consistent with general truth, the mind, reasoning falsely, supposes the cause to be true likewise.) He [L] teaches us therefore to prefer impossible circumstances, if they are probable, to possible ones that are improbable, and by no means to form the fable itself of parts that are absurdly incredible, but to try as much as possible to admit nothing of the kind; but if it cannot be avoided, they should at least be confined to circumstances out of the action itself, as in the case of Œdipus being ignorant of the manner of Laius's death, and not be included in the drama, like the account of the Pythian games in the tragedy of Electra [M], or the man in the tragedy of the Myrians, who comes from Tegea to Myria without speaking. It is ridiculous to say that otherwise the fables would be destroyed, for

as like the mutilated Greek as I was able to make it, and as conformable to my general idea of the context, which the reader will admit or reject at his pleasure. See the commentary.

[L] Προαιρεῖσθαι and μὴ ζυνίστασθαι I conceive to be governed by Ὅμηρος δέδιδάχα. If what I have thrown into a parenthesis be considered as a note, and is omitted in the reading, Προαιρεῖσθαι τε κ.τ.λ. follows δέδιδάχα ψευδῇ λέγειν ὡς δεῖ, naturally, almost without the intervention of a comma.

[M] Dacier supposes the absurdity here to arise from the anachronism, as the Pythian games were instituted several centuries after the death of Orestes. Brumoy ascribes it to the improbability of Clytemnestra's not being acquainted previously to the information then given her, with the truth or falsehood of an event in which she was so nearly interested as the death of Orestes, and which is said to have happened before so many spectators.

CHAP.

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fuch



such fables should not at first be formed; but if they are so formed, it seems most reasonable to hide the absurdity as much as possible. The improbabilities in the *Odyssæy*, (such, for instance, as the account of Ulysses being cast on shore,) would have been intolerable, if they had been written by an indifferent poet; but there the poet entirely conceals the absurdity by other pleasing circumstances [N].

The language ought particularly to be laboured in those uninteresting [O] parts which are destitute of manners and sentiment, for the manners and sentiments are only obscured by too splendid a diction.

[N] I have endeavoured to give the best interpretation I could of this passage, reading *ἐνδεχόμενον* for *ἐνδεχόμενον*, as proposed by Winstanley, and *ἀφαιρέσει* for *ἐφαίρει*, with Vittorio.

[O] The connective parts of the poem, where the poet speaks in his own person.



## C H A P. XXV.

## OF OBJECTIONS, AND HOW THEY MAY BE ANSWERED.

As for the objections of criticism and their proper answers, we shall clearly perceive both the number and quality of their forms by considering them in this manner.

The poet being an imitator equally with a portrait painter, or any other artist who forms likenesses, it is evident he must chuse one out of these three modes of imitation: he must either draw things as they were or are, or as they are said or imagined to be, or as they ought to be. And he must form these imitations either by plain language, or by foreign words and metaphors. For there are many peculiar properties incident to language which we concede to the poets.

Neither is the propriety of poetry the same with that of the political or any other art. There are two sorts of error to which poetry is liable, one relating essentially to itself, the other arising from accident. If a poet attempt an imitation which he has not ability to execute, the fault is essential; but if the object of imitation should happen to be improperly chosen, the fault will be only accidental; as for instance, if a horse should be drawn or described as moving both his right legs together; or if, from want of knowledge in any particular art, as phyfic or any other, he should introduce things that are impossible. Whatever these may be, they will not be essential errors of the poetry.



It is from the consideration of these circumstances that the objections of criticism should be answered.

First, then, the poet errs, if what he writes is impossible according to the rules of the art he treats of; but he may be excused, if the true end of poetry is attained by it, if he renders that, or any other part of the poem more interesting, as in the pursuit of Hector [A]. Yet, if this end can be obtained in a greater, or even a less degree, without deviating from the rules of the particular art he is treating of [B], the fault would be without excuse; for errors should be entirely avoided, if possible. We ought particularly to examine if the error is essential to the poetic art or only accidental. For it is certainly a less essential fault to be ignorant that a hind has no horns, than to make a bad imitation of one [C].

If a poet is further blamed for not describing things according to truth, he may say he describes them as they ought to be. Like Sophocles, who said he drew the characters of men as they ought to be, and Euripides as they really were. Such is the proper answer to this objection.

[A] See chapter xxiv.

[B] So Batteux, Ordonez, and Segni, making a stop after τέχνην. Goulston says, 'Distinctio post ἡμετέραν, non post τέχνην;' which gives a different, and, in my opinion, not so good a meaning.

[C] To paint it ill though properly as to its nature. Batteux has translated this, 'que d'avoir mal peint une biche AVEC des cornes:' which must be a mistake arising from inadvertency, as this would destroy the opposition, the last example incurring the blame both of ignorance and bad execution.

But



But if it does not come under either of these descriptions, he may say it is according to received opinion, as in what relates to the gods. For the things we say of them may neither be better than they really are, nor according to truth; since, as Xenophanes observes, 'in these [D] things 'there is nothing evident.' Or, if the objection cannot be answered by saying it is better than the common opinion, perhaps it may be said that the fact was actually so at that time, as in this instance:

\* A wood of spears stood by, that fix'd upright,  
\* Shot from their flashing points a quivering light.' IL. x.

for such was then the usual order of placing them, as it is now among the Illyrians.

In examining whether a thing is either said or done, properly or improperly, we are not only to regard whether the thing itself is good or bad, but we must consider the character of the actor or speaker, as well as concerning whom, and to whom, and for what cause, he speaks or acts; as, for example, if it would be a greater advantage to receive it, or a greater disadvantage to omit it.

Some objections may be answered by recurring to the various properties of language. The word may be foreign as in this passage of Homer;

[E] 'On mules the infection first began,' IL. i.

[D] Οὐ σαφὴν τὰδε. VITTORIO, as also HEINSIUS, who quotes the lines of Xenophanes, which begin,

Καὶ τὸ μὲν οὖν σαφὲς ἔτις ἀνὴρ ἴδεν.

[E] The objection must be, that, as the Greeks came by sea, they could not want mules.

where



where perhaps *αὐτῶν* does not signify mules but centinels. And in this where he says of Dolon *Εἶδος μὲν ἔην κακὸς*, 'Bad was his form, IL. x. it may be answered, that *εἶδος κακὸς* may not mean a deformed body, but an ugly [F] countenance; for the Cretans call a person with a handsome face *εὐεῖδος*. And so of

'Now fill with livelier [G] wine the mantling bowl; IL. ix.

where the word 'livelier' may not mean less diluted with water for the purpose of intemperance, but wine filled hastily.

Or the expressions may be considered as metaphorical. So in this sentence

'The other gods and men in sleep profound

'All night were wrapp'd:— IL. II. [H]

[F] Pope, therefore, renders it,

'Not blest by nature with the charms of face.'

[G] Ζωρότεραν δὲ κέραϊρε. 'Quidam etiam quasi ζωρὸς dictum voluerunt ut VIVACIOR 'potus.'—STEPH. THES.

[H] The other examples which precede this illustration, viz.

Ἦτοι ὅτ' ἐς πεδίον τὸ Τροϊκὸν ἀθροισίεν,  
and

Αυλῶν συρίγωνθ' ὁμαδὸν,

I have omitted, as no notice is taken of either of them in the text. But the other line is manifestly alluded to, viz. *παννύχιοι* for τὸ πλεῖστον μέρος τῆς νυκλὸς. I think the whole passage is corrupted, and that the example of *παννύχιοι* should be taken from the beginning of IL. x. where the next quotations soon follow: especially as, in a ms. in the library at Paris, No. 1741, in all the Medicean mss. and the translation of Valla, after *παννύχιοι*, instead of *καί* we have *ἀμα δὲ φησιν*.

where

For



For ALL is often used metaphorically for MANY, all being supposed to imply some large number. Or as

[1] ' Orion, sole of all the starry train,

' Ne'er bathes his blazing forehead in the main.' IL. XVIII.

where Orion is called the sole by a metaphor, because he is the most known and conspicuous.

Sometimes the objection may be answered by attending to the accent, as the difficulties in the following passage are solved by Hippias the Thasian.  $\Delta\acute{\iota}\delta\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\ \delta\epsilon\ \alpha\iota\ [\kappa]$  will imply a promise; but change the accent from the antepenult to the penult, and  $\delta\acute{\iota}\delta\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu$  will only be an order to the dream to give hope. And  $\tau\omicron\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \xi\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\alpha\pi\acute{\upsilon}\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\ \omicron\mu\epsilon\lambda\omega$ , with the circumflex on the  $\omega$ , will have the absurd signification of 'dry wood rotted by the rain;' but remove the circumflex [L], and it will be, 'which was not rotted by the rain [M].'

[1] Though Pope (whom I quote when he does not deviate too widely from the original) has a long note on this observation of Aristotle, he has taken no notice of  $\alpha\iota\eta$  in his translation, on which account I have been obliged to alter it.

[K] This alludes to the order given by Jupiter to the dream in IL. II. to deceive Agamemnon. The line is not extant. I have been obliged to paraphrase this paragraph to make it at all intelligible.

[L]  $\Lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omicron\upsilon\iota\tau\epsilon\ \tau\omicron\ \xi\ \omicron\chi\acute{\upsilon}\rho\epsilon\omicron\nu$ . Aristot. DE SOPHIST. ELENCH. L. I. CH. IV. speaking of this identical circumstance.

[M] — ' Of some stately oak the last remains,

' Or hardy fir, unperish'd by the rains.'

POPE, IL. XXIII.

Objections



Objections may be confuted by the division of the sentence; as in this instance,

[N] 'Mortal were now, what erst immortal were;

'Mix'd, what were pure.'

Or by ambiguous expressions; as in this passage of Empedocles,

[O] — 'Now of two parts the night had wan'd

'The larger share, but yet a third remain'd: IL. x.

where the word *larger* is ambiguous. Or by the established custom of speech; as the word *κεκράμενον* [P], MIXED, is used for wine, on this principle the poet writes,

[N] Αἶψα δὲ θνήτ' ἐφύοντο, τὰ πρὶν μάθον ἀθάνατ' εἶναι,

Ζωρά τε πρὶν, κέκρητο

The sense of this depends on the punctuation: by putting the comma after *ζωρά* instead of *πρὶν*, in the second line, the meaning of it is exactly reversed, and will be, 'Those things became pure, which before were mixed.'

[O] The larger part of two thirds of the night, not a part larger than two thirds; for then another third could not have been left.

παρώχην δὲ πλεῶν νύξ

τῶν δύο μοιρῶν, τρίτη δ' ἐτι μοῖρα λελείπεται.

Of which Aristotle judged it sufficient to quote the first part only, where there is really no ambiguity.

[P] So in Hebrew the participle *רֵמֶשׂ*, MIXED, is used for wine. The ancients seldom drank wine unmixed. In a preceding example, Homer was not blamed for making his heroes intemperate by drinking wine *ζωρόν*, absolutely pure, but *ζωρότερον*, purer than usual.

M

— 'Greaves



— Greaves of newly plated tin; IL. XXI [Q].

and artificers in steel are called braziers, and Ganymede is said

— To pour the wine to Jove; IL. XX.

though the gods are not supposed to drink wine. But this may be considered as metaphorical. It is right also, when a word seems to be capable of giving contrary senses, to examine how many significations it may have in the passage before us; as in these lines of Homer:

Five plates of various metal, various mould,

Compos'd the shield, of brass each outward fold,

Of tin each inward, and the middle gold;

There stuck the lance: IL. XX.

where the sense of the word **STUCK** must be that the lance was stopped by the golden plate. For [R] in considering the number of meanings the word may have here, the most natural will be, that it stopped without penetrating.

We may also answer objections in the words of Glauco, who says, 'That some men taking up an opinion hastily, and then reasoning from prejudice in favour of that opinion; will blame any thing that is

[Q] Instead of brass. The brass of the ancients is said to have been made of copper with a mixture of **TIN** instead of zinc.

[R] I have followed Batteux here, whose emendation and interpretation of this passage I think excellent. He reads *πολλακῶς* for *ποσακῶς*. Though, if instead of *ἐνδὲχεται* we read *ἐνδύχεται*, the passage may be rendered, 'The ambiguity arising from the different meanings of the same word may be removed thus; if any one should contend that the spear penetrated to the opposite side,' (what follows will then be connected with *ἐπισκοπεῖν ποσακῶς ἀν σημεί- νει τοῦτο ἐν τῷ εἰρημένῳ*, — ἢ ὡς Γλαύκων λέγει κ. τ. λ.) 'either the word may bear several meanings, or the objector may be under a mistake.'

'contrary



‘contrary to what they have presupposed.’ This is what happened concerning Icarus[s]; for, conceiving him to be a Laconian, it has been thought absurd that Telemachus should not meet him when he went to Lacedæmon: while, perhaps, the poet follows the opinion of the Cephalonians, who assert that Ulysses married among them, and that Icadus, and not Icarus, was the name of his father-in-law. This objection, therefore arises probably from a mistake.

The impossible should be considered as conducing, on the whole, either to the end which it is the aim of poetry to attain, or to excellence of character, or as being agreeable to received opinion. For, as to the chief end of poetry, it is better to chuse probable impossibility, than improbable possibility. And [T] as to excellence of character, it may be proper, as in the paintings of Zeuxis, to give examples of perfection. And as to the seeming absurdities that are received from common opinion, they may not, perhaps, be contrary to reason; for many improbable events may have really happened.

As to the way in which contradictions may be excused, they should be considered in the same light as confutations in an argument. We should observe if the same thing is spoken of, or to the same person, or in the same manner, if the person speaks in his own person, and concerning what things, and [U] whether he that may be delivering his opinion

[S] The father of Penelope. This alludes to the journey of Telemachus to Sparta. OD. IV.

[T] Winstanley's transposition of this passage, which I have implicitly followed, has cleared up every difficulty, and rendered the antithesis complete.

[U] *Ὁ ὅτι ἀνὴρ φρονίμος ὑποθέσθαι.* This has been generally rendered, ‘If it is what a sensible man might lay down as his opinion.’ But this does not seem agreeable with what goes



opinion is a sensible man. The reprehensions of impiety and absurdity will indeed be just, when they are introduced without necessity. Neither should absurdity be employed, as it is by Euripides in his Egeus [x]; or impiety, as in the character of Menelaus, in his Orestes.

The objections of criticism may then be reduced to these five species: the impossible, the absurd, the hurtful, the contradictory, and the errors against the rules of the art. The answers to these objections may be collected from what we have said, and they are twelve [y] in number.

before. Aristotle speaks of excusing contradictions, and says the circumstances of the speaker, and the things spoken of, &c. should be considered. But whether the things are, or are not, what a sensible man might say, can only relate to the things themselves that are said, and not to any circumstances attending the saying of them, or the things they may have reference to. If a sentiment is such as a sensible man may deliver, it will want no excuse, as no blame can be incurred. And, by saying it is what a sensible man ought not to deliver, the fault, indeed, is pointed out, but no excuse made, which is here the express design of Aristotle. His meaning must certainly be, that, before an absurdity is blamed, the character of the person who utters it should be considered; and adds afterwards, but when the character of the speaker does not render the absurdity necessary, as in the case of Egeus, the fault is inexcusable. I would, therefore, transpose the words thus: *ἢ ὅ αὖ ὑποθήται, φρόνιμος*; which I have ventured to adopt in the translation, as it agrees with the other reasons of excuse.

[x] See Winstanley's note on this passage.

[y] I. If the poem is made more interesting. II. If the poet errs from ignorance in any particular art. III. If, instead of describing things as they are, he describes them as they ought to be. IV. Or according to received opinion. V. Or as they actually were at the time the events are supposed to have happened. VI. Or according to the circumstances of time and place, and the character of the speaker or actor. VII. Or by the use of foreign words. VIII. Or by metaphors. IX. Or by the accent. X. Or by the division of the sentence, i. e. the punctuation. XI. Or by the different and ambiguous meanings a word may have. XII. Or by the error of the objector, who first takes up an opinion without foundation, and then blames the poet for saying what may not agree with that opinion.

CHAP.



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**CHAP. XXVI.**  
**TRAGIC IMITATION AND EPIC COMPARED.—PREFERENCE GIVEN TO TRAGEDY.—CONCLUSION.**

IT may now, perhaps, be asked, whether tragic or epic imitation is the most excellent [A]. If the imitation is to be preferred which is least adapted to the vulgar [B] and most calculated to please the politest spectators, that which imitates every [C] thing is clearly most adapted to the vulgar, as not being intelligible without the addition of much movement and [D] action. As bad players on the flute turn round, if they would imitate the motion of a discus. Or, when they perform the part of Scylla, are obliged to pull [E] the leader of the chorus. Now, the same censure that the older actors cast on the modern ones, may, according

[A] *Βέλτιον* MSS.

[B] *Ἡττον φορτικὴν*. So Aristophanes, *Κωμωδιὰ φορτικὴ*: ‘comœdia inepta, insulsa.’ See, also, Aristot. *Polit.* l. viii. chapter vi. Segni renders it *VILE*: ‘ha manco del vile.’

[C] Not only imitates actions, taken in a dramatic sense, but shapes, motions, &c. Goulston translates it ‘eam quæ omnimodo (numero et harmoniâ) imitatur,’ taking *ἀπᾶντα* adverbially.

[D] The words *ἀν μὴ αὐτὸς προσῆ* have occasioned much difficulty. Toup proposes to read *ἀν μὴ αὐλὸς προσῆ*, as if the whole effect was to depend on the accompaniment. But how will this agree with the subsequent comparison of the bad flute player using action to make himself understood? I would rather read *ἀν μὴ αὐτὸς προσῆ*, and suppose *αὐτὸς* to mean the actor: ‘unless (the actor) himself appeared.’

[E] To imitate the drawing of the ships.



[F] to the judgment of its enemies, be applied to tragedy. For Minifcus called Callipides a monkey for carrying his action too far. And the same opinion was entertained of Pindarus. Tragedy, therefore, with all its requisites, they say, has the same relation to the epopee, that the modern actors have to the older ones, and that the epopee is calculated for politer persons who do not require the addition of action and scenery. But tragedy, for meaner persons, being more adapted to the vulgar, and consequently inferior.

But, in the first place, this accusation does not affect the poet, but the actor. And, besides, it is possible to use too much action in reciting epic poetry, as was practised by Solistratus, and even in singing, as was done by Mnastheus of Opus. Neither is all action to be despised, any more than all kinds of dancing, but only that which is bad. So Callipides was blamed, as some now are, for imitating women of bad character. Tragedy, also, as well as the epopee, may attain its end without representation, for we can judge of its merit by reading only: therefore, if it is better in other respects, no objection can be raised from the representation, since that is not absolutely necessary.

Tragedy, then, has every requisite in common with the epopee, (since it may equally use verse,) [G] with the additional ornaments of music and scenery,

[F] I have added this to make the sense clear, as Aristotle obviously states this objection for the purpose of confuting it.

[G] Ἐξῆς χρῆσθαι: 'may use (employ) its own iambic verse, to attain its end without the assistance of music and action.' Mr. Winstanley is of opinion that if its own iambic verse had been meant, it should have been χρῆται. But if hexameter verse is meant here by



scenery, which are no small parts of its composition, and which render the pleasure it excites more striking. It is, therefore, affecting, both when it is read [H] and acted. And it possesses another advantage, in confining the action by which the end of the imitation is attained within a narrower compass. For, being, as it were, condensed, it becomes more interesting than if it were protracted through a longer succession of time. What would be the effect, for example, if the *Cedipus* of Sophocles were to be put into as many verses as the *Iliad*? It may further be added, that the epic imitation has less unity, since there is no epic poem that cannot furnish subjects for several [I] tragedies. For should the fable be confined to one action, it would either appear trifling from its shortness, or, if it were spun out to the usual length of the *epopee* [K] it would be languid and insipid. But if it is variegated, I mean compounded of various actions, it must be deficient in point of unity. Even the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* contain many parts, each of which has in itself a

τῷ μέτρῳ, Aristotle argues very unlike himself, by contending for the superiority of tragedy, not from what it was, but from what it might be made; not only contrary to the universal practice of the Grecian theatre, but to the directions of nature herself, who, he says, in chapter iv. pointed out the iambic as the proper verse for the drama. See the Commentary.

[H] Certainly, I think, ἀναγνώσει, and not ἀναγνώρισει.

[I] Aristotle says, chapter xxiii. 'That the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* would only produce one, or 'at most, two tragedies each.' This seems a contradiction. But, perhaps, the objection may be answered by one of the methods proposed in the preceding chapter. We must examine if it is τὸ αὐτὸ, 'the same thing,' that is spoken of. There, I imagine, Aristotle spoke of the simple argument of the poem, and here he considers it as adorned and augmented by epifodes.

[K] Ἡ ἀκολούθησι τῷ τῷ μέτρῳ μήκει. It is impossible Aristotle could mean to compare the length of a poem with the length of the verse in which it was written. He must mean to use the words of Mr. Twining (see his note on the place) 'according to the usual length of poems 'written in that metre.'

confi-



considerable degree of bulk, and yet these poems are as much the imitation of one action, as the nature of the composition would admit.

If tragedy, then, excels in all these circumstances, as well as in the effect which it is the peculiar end of the poetic art to attain; (for neither ought to produce an accidental pleasure, but only that which we have mentioned;) it will certainly be more excellent than the epopee, from attaining the end of the art itself more effectually.

And here I shall conclude what I had to say concerning tragedy, and epic poetry, as to themselves, the number and difference of their species, the causes of their merits and defects, the objections that may be made to them, and the manner in which those objections may be answered.



considerable degree of bulk, and yet these poems are as much the imitations of our action, as the nature of the composition would admit.

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## COMMENTARY

ON THE

## POETIC OF ARISTOTLE.



THE POETIC OF ARISTOTLE

# COMMENTARY

## CHAPTER I

THE POETIC OF ARISTOTLE  
IN THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF BEING IMITATIONS.  
WHICH ARE SET TO THE FLUTE AND THE LYRE, ALL AGREE  
ON THE  
RAMBLES, AND THE GREATER PART OF THOSE COMPOSITIONS  
THE EPOPEE AND TRAGEDY, AS ALSO COMEDY AND DITHY-

By imitation, Aristotle does not mean merely description, but a lively representation of human actions, passions, and manners. It would be superfluous to say much on a subject which has been so amply and clearly treated by Mr. Twining, in his 'Dissertation on Poetry considered as an imitative art, and to which I refer such of my readers as desire full and satisfactory information on this subject. Aristotle, undoubtedly, places that species of imitation in the first class, which is performed by persons acting, as in the drama, and, for the most part, in the epopees of Homer. This appears from what he says of the epopee, in the twenty-fourth chapter. 'The poet (he observes) should appear himself as little as possible, for whenever he speaks in his own person



## COMMENTARY.

## CHAP. I.

## NOTE I.

THE EPOPEE AND TRAGEDY, AS ALSO COMEDY AND DITHY-  
RAMBICS, AND THE GREATER PART OF THOSE COMPOSITIONS  
WHICH ARE SET TO THE FLUTE AND THE LYRE, ALL AGREE  
IN THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF BEING IMITATIONS.

**BY** imitation, Aristotle does not mean merely description, but a lively representation of human actions, passions, and manners. It would be superfluous to say much on a subject which has been so amply and clearly treated by Mr. Twining, in his 'Dissertation on Poetry considered as 'an imitative art,' and to which I refer such of my readers as desire full and satisfactory information on this subject. Aristotle, undoubtedly, places that species of imitation in the first class, which is performed by persons acting, as in the drama, and, for the most part, in the epopees of Homer. This appears from what he says of the epopee, in the twenty-fourth chapter. 'The poet (he observes) should appear 'himself as little as possible, for whenever he speaks in his own person



‘he ceases to be an imitator,’ seeming even to contradict what he had before allowed in the third chapter, ‘that the poet might imitate, either like Homer, sometimes by simple narration, and sometimes by assuming a different character; or entirely by narration, without assuming any character.’ It may perhaps be impossible strictly to reconcile this difference of opinion, but it obviously shews the great preference he gave personal imitation to any other, from which arose his strong predilection for tragedy; and I think we may fairly deduce from it, that even the poet whose imitation is solely narrative, must paint in strong colours the effects of action, passions and manners, and not merely relate a fable though fictitious, like an historian, for the purpose of drawing moral reflections from it.

Those passages, nevertheless, of an epic poem, where the poet speaks in his own person, have great beauty from their contrast with the impassioned parts, and the relief they give the mind, provided they are neither too frequent nor too long, and the rule laid down by Aristotle, in his twenty-fourth chapter, concerning the elegance of the versification be carefully observed. Mr. Twining quotes a beautiful example from the first *Æneid*.

‘*Urbs antiqua fuit, (Tyrî tenuère coloni,*

‘*Carthago, Italiam contra Tiberinaque longe*

‘*Ostia—*’

Innumerable instances may be produced from Milton; as the description of evening and of paradise, in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*; in this he is superior to any poet ancient or modern, though there are many striking passages of the same kind in the *Odyssey*.



The modern invention of reciting a tale, by means of an epistolary correspondence between the persons concerned, is a very happy mode of imitation, uniting in some measure the different advantages of the epopee and the drama. Perhaps a work of this nature, where the character and style of all the persons corresponding, is nicely discriminated and rigidly observed, is yet a desideratum in imitative composition [A].

## NOTE II.

THERE ARE SOME DANCERS WHO, REGULATING THEIR GESTURES BY RHYTHM, CAN IMITATE MANNERS, PASSIONS AND ACTIONS.

THE dances of our opera will afford proof of this. In the dance of the Deserter, I have seen the spectators almost as much affected by Rossi, as by the acting of Mrs. Siddons. This subject is well illustrated in an ingenious treatise (written by Mr. Nares,) entitled, REMARKS ON THE FAVORITE BALLET OF CUPID AND PSYCHE.

## NOTE III.

THE EPOPEE USES PLAIN LANGUAGE, OR VERSE.

MY own opinion of the proper construction of this passage, and with what qualification it is to be understood as to the regular epic poem I have already given in a note on this place in my translation, and

[A] See Beattie on Fiction and Romance, page 567.



on a passage in the sixth chapter. But it is impossible to observe the great earnestness with which Dacier and Metastasio support their opposite opinions, the one zealous for the honor of [B] Telemachus, and the other partial to the beautiful poems of Ariosto and Tasso, without being convinced of the necessity of sober criticism, divesting itself of all national and personal partiality.

And yet after all it can be of little consequence what Aristotle says on this subject, since in his time the [C] epopee, or the drama, unadorned by verse, if known at all, so far from having attained that degree of perfection to which they have been carried by the moderns, were considered as an irregular and spurious kind of composition.

[B] A fellow-countryman of Dacier's, Boffu, has settled this difference of opinion by the following accommodating hypothesis. 'But if an epopee should be written in prose, would it be an epic poem? I think not, because a poem is a composition in verse, but nevertheless that does not hinder it from being an epopee; so a tragedy in prose is not a tragic poem, but it is still a tragedy. Those who have been in doubt whether the Roman comedy was a poem have never doubted its being comedy.'

Boffu, l. i. chap. v. See also Beattie on Poetry and Music, page 295, and on Fable and Romance, page 518.

[C] The Cyropædia of Xenophon, though I believe generally allowed to be not wholly founded on truth, still takes its most prominent features from history, and perhaps does not deviate much more from fact than the account of Cyrus given by Herodotus, though it has more of a poetical form, as there is a manifest design in the arrangement of the circumstances. It seems to bear some resemblance to the historical novels of the present day.

Strabo, it is true, mentions other writers of poetical prose. *Λύσαντες τὸ μέτρον, τ' ἄλλα δὲ φυλάσσαντες, τὰ ποιητικὰ συνέγραψαν οἱ περὶ Κάδμου καὶ Φερεκύδην καὶ Ἑκαταίων, l. i.*

For Cadmus and Pherecydes and Hecataeus wrote poetry, not confining themselves to verse, but retaining its other requisites. Perhaps, however, by *ποιητικὰ*, in this place, composition in general is meant, since Suidas says of Hecataeus, *Πρῶτος ἱστορίαν περὶ τῶν ἐξ ἡμετέρων.*

'He first wrote history in prose.'

From



From the examples here produced by Aristotle, I think it obvious he considers the word epopee, in this place, according to its etymology, as imitating by words alone, independent of musical accompaniment [D], without the distinction of prose and verse, and not at all as confined to narrative imitation. Neither is his use of the word epopee afterwards, in its more appropriated sense, any objection to the more general meaning he gives it here, since similar instances may be found in this short treatise, as in the words ἐπεισόδιον, μέτρον, and ἀπλός. See note [c] on the translation of chapter xiii. I think it may be doubted whether Aristotle would have classed a modern comedy with the drama, as being a species of dramatic composition, though deficient in the necessary requisites of verse and musical accompaniment; or with the epopee, as he has the mimes of Sophron, and the Socratic dialogues, as wanting every character of poetry except the essential one of imitation.

The construction of the whole passage has occasioned much difference of opinion among the various commentators. As it appears to me, Aristotle having asserted that the epopee uses either plain language, or verse of different sorts, as well as the particular species of verse which custom, founded on the nature of the composition, had

[D] Though I profess this to be my opinion, yet as I by no means am an advocate for any particular hypothesis at the expence of truth, I must mention one objection that strikes me. If Aristotle, by λόγοις ψιλῶς, means prose, there appears to be wanting something added to μέτροις, in this particular place, to distinguish verse unaccompanied with music, as one of the means of imitation peculiar to the epopee. The friends of an hypothesis to be combated hereafter, would perhaps say, that by μέτροις here, hexameter verse only is meant, did not the τοιῶνς μίγνῶσα that immediately follows, convey the most compleat refutation of such an appropriated use of μέτρον. See note II. on chapter xxvi.

appropriated



appropriated to it, aware that he was hazarding a paradox, explains himself by saying, imitation, and not verse, was the criterion of Poetry; and as on one hand there would be no general name under which imitations, whether narrative or in a dramatic form, if written in prose, or an unusual kind of verse, could be classed, unless they were allowed to come under that of the epopee, whose characteristic it was to imitate by words alone, unassisted by music or representation; so on the other it was a mistake to suppose that verse alone, independant of imitation, was the essential part of poetry, or that poets were styled elegiac, or epic, from writing in epic or elegiac measures, and not from the subjects they chose, and their manner of treating them.

Perhaps the following free paraphrase of the whole passage may more plainly elucidate my idea of the reasoning of the critic.

‘ The epopee imitates by language alone, without the assistance of  
 ‘ musical accompaniment; and that, either in [E] prose, or in verse,  
 ‘ which verse may be either of various sorts mixed together, or of one  
 ‘ sort only, viz. hexameter, as has hitherto been the general, and almost  
 ‘ universal practice.’

‘ I know I am now advancing a paradox. But if we do not admit  
 ‘ certain compositions in prose to be classed under the general name of  
 ‘ epopee, what shall we call the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus,

[E] Mr. Twining thinks it odd that Aristotle should mention prose first. But it seems to be his usual practice to begin with the worst mode. See his enumeration of the different forms of tragic fable, chapter xiv. and the methods of discovery, chapter xvi. Prose is the greatest deviation from the proper form of the regular epopee, mixed verse the next.

and



and the dialogues of Socrates? Fictitious imitation of action, and character, is the essential distinction of poetry, and this they possess; therefore we must at least allow them to be a species of poetry, as possessing its principal requisite, though divested of verification, which we acknowledge to be a great, and indeed a necessary ornament; on the same principle as the history of Herodotus (see chap. ix. [r]), if written in verse, would still be a species of history, as being destitute of the essential character of poetry, fictitious imitation, though possessing its chief and peculiar ornament, verification.

If, indeed, we are so strict as to admit no sort of compositions to be classed with the epopee but such as are regular epic poems, where shall we place any narrative imitation, that might be made in iambic, elegiac, or any other kind of verse, except hexameter, possessing the essential character of poetry, though wanting the requisite of heroic verse, which we allow to be most congenial with it?

It may possibly be said in answer, that these compositions may be classed according to the structure of the verse; for custom, it must be allowed, has authorized such a distinction; and we are used to distinguish poets rather by the form of the verse than the nature of the imitation, calling those elegiac poets who use elegiac verse, and those epic poets who use heroic verse, without paying any regard to the subject they write on. Nay, if a didactic essay, either on physic or music, is written in verse, though entirely destitute of fiction or imitation, it is usual to call the author a poet; yet certainly Homer [g].

[r] See also note 1 on that chapter.

[g] (Virgil and Milton.)



‘ whose works imitate actions and manners, can have nothing in common  
 ‘ with Empedocles [H], except the verse; therefore one indeed may  
 ‘ justly be styled a poet, according to the proper sense of the word, but  
 ‘ the other is rather a naturalist than a poet.’

‘ The same objection may be made to my classing compositions in  
 ‘ mixed verse with the epopee, and the same answer may be given.  
 ‘ Chæremon has written a poem, called the Centaur, in various sorts  
 ‘ of verse; the work possesses the poetic requisites of fiction and imita-  
 ‘ tion; it is true it is written in a new and an unusual form, and is so  
 ‘ far faulty, in deviating from the proper composition of the regular  
 ‘ epopee [I]; but shall the author on this account be denied the name  
 ‘ of poet, since his work possesses the essential qualities of poetry?’

‘ I think then there can be no doubt of my being right as to classing  
 ‘ poetry according to the imitation and not the verse.’

In this concluding sentence, in the original, the critic speaks a little more *ex cathedrâ*, using the imperative, *διωρίσθω*.

Taking the word epopee in this enlarged sense, I shall, in the course of these observations, draw a part of my illustrations from some of those compositions which we usually call novels, and which Dr. Beattie [K]

[H] (Lucretius and Armstrong). It is true there are parts of these writers, especially the former, which may be classed with poetry of the highest order, but these are episodic; the same thing, in some degree, may be said of the historian and the orator.

[I] See note III. chapter xxiv.

[K] Essay on Fable and Romance, page 518. On Poetry and Music, part i. ch. ii. p. 45.  
 observes,



[a] It may appear odd to cite such imitations as *Chaffin* and the *Gambler with Comedy*; but it they must be, according to the definition given here by Aristotle. Even the *Fast* *Comedy*.



## CHAP. II.

## NOTE I.

THE PERSONS IMITATED MUST EITHER BE REPRESENTED AS  
BETTER THAN THOSE OF THE PRESENT TIME, OR WORSE,  
OR AS THEY ACTUALLY ARE.

**BY** better, in this place, as Mr. Twining justly observes, superiority in mental and bodily accomplishments is rather meant than in moral virtues; a distinction which will be considered more at large hereafter, when poetical manners are investigated and distinguished [A]. Even Homer tells us his heroes were of a nature superior to the degenerate race of men in his time.

With regard to modern compositions, this rule seems to be observed in the following manner. In tragedy and the regular epopee, the characters are drawn better, or beyond the life: in farce, in pantomime, and in the burlesque tragedy and epopee, they are drawn worse; and in the comic epopee or comedy, whether truly comic, like *Tom Jones* and *the School for Scandal*, or serious, like *Grandison* and *Clarissa*, *the School for Rakes*, and *the Gamester* [B], as they actually are

[A] See note 1, chap. xv. See also Beattie's *Essay on Poetry and Music*, part i. chap. iv. page 69.

[B] It may appear odd to class such imitations as *Clarissa* and *the Gamester* with Comedy; but so they must be, according to the definition given here by Aristotle. Even the Fatal Curiosity



are at the time. Such characters as Grandison and Lovelace, though possessing virtues and vices beyond common life, and let me add, out of nature, are yet not drawn with manners different from those of the present day, which cannot be said of Macbeth and of Posthumus, of Hudibras, and of Pierrot. It must be observed, that many of our after-pieces, though called farces, are in reality short comedies.

As a further illustration of this, it may be observed that there are few tragic fables, (taking tragic in its usual sense,) which may not be rendered comic or burlesque, by altering the station and manners of the persons. For to use the words of Dr. Beattie, 'in most human characters there are blemishes moral, intellectual, or corporeal, by augmenting which to a certain degree you may form a comic character, or by raising the virtues, abilities, or external advantages of an individual, you form epic, and tragic characters [c].'

This subject is alluded to with some humour in Lloyd's Prologue to the Jealous Wife.

'Quarrels, upbraidings, jealousies and spleen,

'Grow too familiar in the comic scene;

Curiosity of Lillo falls under the same circumstance, though given as a perfect mode of Tragedy, equal to the *Œdipus*, by a most elegant Critic, whom Mr. Winstanley justly calls 'vir si quis alius ἀριστοεικώτατος,' see *Philological Enquiries*. For a refutation of this eulogium on the Fatal Curiosity, see note III. chap. xiii.

[c] Essay on Poetry and Music, part i. chap. v. page 120. See also the Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff, page 158, and *Phil. Enquiries*, page 159.

'Tinge



• Tinge but the language with heroic chime,  
 • 'Tis passion, pathos, character sublime.  
 • What big round words had swell'd the pompous scene,  
 • A king the husband, and the wife a queen !'

## NOTE II.

## 'PARODIES.'

THE present use of this word is strictly consonant with that of the ancients, who applied it to the giving a ridiculous turn to passages in Homer and the tragic poets. There are many in Aristophanes. One of the happiest modern instances I know is the parody of the speech of Sarpedon to Glaucus, in the Rape of the Lock. See also the genealogy of Agamemnon's sceptre parodied in the same poem, Canto v. ver. 87.



## CHAP. III.

## NOTE I.

THESE, AS WE SAID AT FIRST, ARE THE THREE DIFFERENCES  
OF IMITATION.

ARISTOTLE, having given examples of the different circumstances by which the varieties of imitations were distinguished, proceeds now to shew that imitations, differing from each other in one of these circumstances, may be alike in another. It is remarkable that he gives no instance of this partial resemblance arising from the means of imitation being the same; which is the more to be regretted as such an instance must have thrown more light on what is said of the epopee in the first chapter, and shewn more particularly in what respect Homer's poems resembled the Mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus, the Dialogues of Socrates, and the Hippocentaur of Chæremon.



## CHAP. IV.

## NOTE I.

THOSE THINGS WHICH WE VIEW WITH PAIN IN THEMSELVES,  
WE LIKE TO SEE REPRESENTED AS ACCURATELY AS POSSIBLE;  
SUCH AS THE FIGURES OF THE MOST SAVAGE WILD BEASTS,  
AND OF DEAD BODIES.

I CANNOT agree here with Mr. Twining in the reason he gives for preferring with Vittorio ἀριμολάρων, to ἀγριμολάρων,—the sense of the passage ‘itself:—which (he says) seems to require instances of mean and disgusting rather than of terrible objects;’ since a dead body with which it is joined certainly comes under the last circumstance, and was a usual exhibition in ancient tragedy. For we should recollect that Aristotle, though he draws the allusion from painting, must still be supposed to keep his eye on the subject he is treating of, poetic, and more especially, tragic imitation; which could never be considered in any light as an amusement, if the terrible scenes which it produces did not come under the case of the illustration here brought from painting, pleasing as an imitation though disagreeable in reality; disagreeable, not from producing mean and disgusting objects, but from awakening too strongly the passions by affecting and terrible ones.

The author of the Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful, justly observes, ‘when danger or pain press too nearly they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible, but at certain distances,  
‘ and



‘ and with certain modifications, they are delightful, as we every day  
‘ experience [A].

It must, however, be confessed, that the following remark of the same  
judicious critic, is strongly in favor of Mr. Twining and Vittorio:  
‘ When the object represented in painting or poetry is such as we should  
‘ have no desire of seeing in reality, then I may be sure that its power  
‘ in poetry or painting is owing to the power of imitation, and to no  
‘ cause operating in the thing itself. So it is with most of the pieces  
‘ which the painters call still life. In these a cottage or a dunghill, the  
‘ meanest and most ordinary furniture of the kitchen are capable of  
‘ giving us pleasure. But when the object of the painting or poem is  
‘ such as we should run to see if real, let it affect us with what odd sort  
‘ of sense it will, we may rely upon it that the power of the poem or  
‘ picture is more owing to the nature of the thing itself than to the  
‘ mere effect of the imitation, or to a consideration of the skill of the  
‘ imitator, however excellent [B].’

In the letters of Mr. Jackson of Exeter, we find an observation some-  
thing similar as to painting. ‘ A deep road, a puddle of water, a bank  
‘ covered with docks and briars, and an old tree or two, are all the cir-  
‘ cumstances in many a fine landscape. As clowns and half-starved  
‘ cattle are the figures a landscape-painter chuses for his pictures; so  
‘ rough-looking fellows, wrapped up in sheets and blankets, are chosen  
‘ by the history painter to express the greatest personages, and in the

[A] Part i. sect. vii. See also part iv. sect. vii.

[B] Part i. sect. xvi.



most dignified actions of their lives [c]. Nearly the same observation is made by M. Marmontel [d].

From this circumstance in painting, however, I have often heard a false conclusion drawn; and because the various tints of autumnal decay afford a better subject to a painter than the luxuriant charms of summer, it is not uncommon to hear that season preferred as being really more beautiful. The poet knows better; for one poetical description of autumn, there are a thousand of spring [e]. As well might a real situation

[c] Letter vi.

[d] See Encyclopedie, Art. Interêt.

[e] 'To the appearance of spring, the imagination joins that of the seasons which are to follow; to the tender buds that are perceived by the eye, the imagination adds, flowers, fruit, shades, and sometimes the mysteries they may conceal. It brings into one point of view the scenes that are to succeed, and sees things less as they are than as it wishes them to be. On the contrary, in autumn we can only contemplate the scene before us. If we wish to anticipate the spring, our course is stopped by winter, and our frozen imagination expires among snows, and fogs.' EMILIUS, Vol. I. l. 1.

'Yet in these presages rude,

'Midst her pensive solitude,

'Fancy with prophetic glance

'Sees the teeming months advance;

'The field, the forest, green, and gay,

'The dappled slope, the tedded hay,

'Sees the reddening orchard blow,

'The harvest wave, the vintage flow:

'Sees June unfold his glossy robe

'Of thousand hues o'er all the globe;

'Sees Ceres grasp her crown of corn,

'And plenty load her ample horn.'

WARTON.

In



situation of distress, be preferred to tranquility, because it excites the feeling more in imitation.

In regard to imitation as effected by the fine arts in general, I perfectly agree with Metastasio, that to render an imitation pleasing, (especially of a terrible object, or of an object that does not of itself interest us,) it is necessary that the means of imitation should be apparent [F].

This appears in painting from the [G] greater excellence allowed to a good picture, compared with those representations of letters, newspapers and deal boards, which sometimes really deceive the eye; and in sculpture, from the great superiority of a fine statue, to a piece of colored wax work. Even in personal mimicry, it seems that the resemblance

In painting we confine ourselves to the individual scene; in poetry we go more to cause and effect. For as Mr. Gilpin observes, 'the business of the poet is only to excite ideas, that of the painter to represent them. The pencil fixes the scene in the happy moment; and the fading tints of autumn become perennial; but the idea excited by the poet connects the falling leaf and the disagreeable impression of decay with it, and anticipates the dreary scenes of winter.'

[F] 'That which is called an imitation has always something in it that is not in the original. If the prototype and transcript be exactly alike; if there be nothing in the one which is not in the other, we may call the latter a representation, a copy, a draught, or a picture of the former, but not an imitation.' BEATTIE ON POETRY AND MUSIC, Part i. chap. v. p. 94.

[G] 'Deception, which is so often recommended by writers on the theory of painting, instead of advancing the art, is, in reality, carrying it back to its infant state. The first essays of painting were certainly nothing but mere imitations of individual objects, and when this amounted to a deception the artist had accomplished his purpose.' NOTE BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS ON MR. MASON'S TRANSLATION OF FRESNOY.



may be too striking, as in the story of the person who was hissed for not imitating the squeaking of a pig, so naturally as his competitor, though it proved to be the animal itself, which he had concealed under his coat. The same circumstance will be found in theatrical imitation [u]. An actor who has really a defect, will never represent such a defect well on the stage. In Hill's Actor [i] there is a very just observation on this. 'There are some characters in which a representation of old age is necessary, but even in these it is better that it should be a pretended than a real age we see. The stage is the scene of representation, not realities. Mr. Foote pleases more in Fondlewife than an old man possibly could; and the reason is evident: we wish to see the representation of a ridiculous, not of a pitiable old fellow. We expect to be entertained with the follies of age, not disgusted with its infirmities. The poet can separate these perfectly in the character that he draws; and when a person of real judgment is to represent it, he also can separate all that is contemptible, from what is the object [k]

[u] This does not apply to excellence, as human nature is always inadequate to our idea of poetical perfection.

[i] Chap. x. page 166.

[k] See Aristotle's idea of comedy, at the beginning of chapter v.

In the Dictionnaire d'Anecdotes, Art. ACTEUR, the following story is told, on what foundation I know not. The authority quoted is a book entitled l'Année Littéraire. 'An actor, after having for thirty years played with success, in several parts, had the misfortune to lame himself, and ever afterwards limped. In spite of this misfortune, as his passion was for tragedy, he concluded that from this accident he was the fittest person in the world to play Richard the Third, whom Shakespear, the author of the tragedy, had represented as lame. Our actor flattered himself with the most brilliant success. He presented himself to the audience with the greatest confidence. But when he came to repeat these words, "the dogs bark at me as I halt by them," there was a general laugh, and he was obliged to quit the stage.'



of compassion, and they it singly. I remember an instance of a French gentleman, who spoke English with the accent of his country, performing the Frenchman in Lethe, on a private theatre, with very indifferent effect. Irish and Scotch characters, it is true, are often well represented by persons of those countries, but such actors are all able to speak good English in other parts, and know how far to carry the imitation. I conceive a Scotchman, or an Irishman, whose conversation was always strongly marked by their respective dialects, would succeed no better than the French gentleman I have mentioned.

To apply this to the illustration of Aristotle. Certainly the picture of a dead body will in general give no disgust, or excite no painful horror, however well executed: but a dead body might be so formed in wax-work, as absolutely for a moment to deceive the eye, and then, even if the deception were declared before its exhibition, I doubt if the spectator would receive any other pleasure than what might arise from the accuracy of the workmanship. But even in a picture, if circumstances in themselves really disgusting are added, horror will rather be excited than pleasure, as in the [L] print of a robber entering a vault to plunder it, and some engravings from Holben's celebrated picture of Death's Dance, which I have seen. The same thing is incident also to poetry, as in a little poem on the death of a lady, which begins,

In yonder grave my Helen lies.

The effect produced on the mind, by the different degrees of exactness in picturesque imitation, may perhaps be illustrated by the common

[L] See Beattie on Poetry and Music, Part i. chap. vi. page 124, note.



looking-glass, the plano-convex mirror on a black foil, and the camera obscura. The looking-glass is the exact representation, or rather reflection of nature, without any apparent alteration in the objects, (for the reversing them is not observed;) and a landscape seen in it, however fine, only gives the same pleasure as when seen through a window, except from the frame, which, if the glass is not too large, both from its artificial boundary, and confining the eye to a part of the view, will give the landscape something more of a picturesque character, than when the objects are seen without it. [M] The plano-convex mirror pleases more, as having more the appearance of an imitation produced by art, and objects in themselves insignificant and mean, acquire a beauty from this, and afford delight. But the camera-obscura gives by far the greatest pleasure, as having every property of a picture, except that it possesses the superior advantage of expressing motion, as well as color and figure. And I am inclined to imagine, that even an affecting or terrific object seen in it, would in some measure partake of that alleviation which Aristotle ascribes to artificial imitation.

As painting imitates entirely by natural means, (I mean as opposed to symbols) it is able to imitate the most exactly of any art except colored statuary; but as its means of imitation are always apparent, the imitation can never be too exact to please, except in objects that are in themselves loathsome and disgusting. The same may be said of statues in stone or

[M] I have not the least doubt of this being the cause why we see some scenes in the plano-convex mirror with greater pleasure than in nature. I am surprised it did not occur to Mr. Gilpin, who is sensible of the effect, but is at a loss to account for it. REMARKS ON FOREST SCENERY, Vol. II. p. 224. If he had shewn it to the first countryman he met, in all probability he would have solved the doubt at once, by telling him it looked like a picture.

metal,



metal, where the material, the mean of imitation is, I think, yet more apparent; but in coloured statuary, or wax-work, where the imitation may for a short time be concealed, that pleasure is not produced, which is the proper result of imitative art, and objects of pity and terror may be so accurately represented as to be really painful. The collection of figures in wax-work coloured, dressed, and sitting down at card tables, exhibited some years ago by Mrs. Wright, on first entrance gave exactly the idea of a well dressed assembly, and the impression remained after the illusion ceased. Nothing of this sort is produced by painting or statuary, and yet how different and superior to this surprise is the pleasure we receive from a portrait of Sir Joshua Reynolds, or a statue of Banks.

As to music I am very ill qualified to treat it scientifically, therefore I hope the musical reader will forgive me if my language is deficient in technical accuracy, provided I make myself understood. But I conceive where it is an imitative art, it imitates sometimes by natural means, and sometimes by compact. Its natural means are the imitation of certain sounds, as the noise of a battle, the singing of birds, the ringing or tolling of bells. Its imitation by compact consists in expressing sorrow by slow movements, anger by quick; high and low, by high and low notes: most of these imitations are rather fanciful than real [N].

The chief energy of music, (to those I mean who, in the words of Shakespear, really have it in their souls, and with the want of which, many who possess it so as to be tremblingly alive to its effects are upbraided,

[N] See Beattie on Poetry and Music, Part I. Chap. vi. Sect. 1, passim.

because



because they take no delight in the dexterity of a performer's execution of difficult passages;) I say to those who really feel the energy of music, it chiefly arises from the power it possesses of raising, heightening, or softening the passions. Nevertheless the influence it derives from the combination of ideas is often mistaken both for imitation and sympathy [o]. Mr. Twining, who I believe is a very good musician, observes that 'the best instrumental music,' (and I presume vocal music where the words are not heard, or not understood, comes under the same predicament 'expressively performed,') leaves the hearer to the free operation of his emotions 'on his fancy, and as it were to the free choice of such ideas as are to him most adapted to re-act upon and heighten the emotion which occasions them.' [p]. That is, in other words, that the effect of musical expression depends much on the temper of our own minds, at the time. Now that temper must be greatly influenced by any ideas that a particular strain may raise in us from circumstances that have formerly attended our hearing it [q]. Will the grenadier march have the same effect on a warrior

[o] 'Such is the secret union when we feel

' A song, a flower, a name at once restore

' Those long-connected scenes where first they mov'd

' The attention.'

AKENSIDE.

[p] Dissertation on music as an imitative art, page 49. For an application of this to the different kinds of versification, as considered particularly congenial with different kinds of poetry, see note iv. chap. xxiv.

[q] 'There is in souls a sympathy with sounds;

' And as the mind is pitch'd, the ear is pleas'd

' With melting sounds or martial, brisk or grave.

' Some



warrior whom it has led on to battle, and a man who was never at a review? But this is not peculiar to musical sounds. A nightingale sings very differently to the person who has only heard it in a cage in London, and the lover who has listened to its voice in the woods in the company of his mistress, or sighed to it in her absence. The cry of a pack of fox hounds in a hollow cover, in which the sportsman hears the finest music, is the mere barking of dogs to the sober citizen. Neither is this sympathy confined to sound, it is equally active in the objects of the other senses. Rousseau says [a], 'I do not know whether to congratulate or pity the man of wisdom, but insensibility, whose bosom was never agitated by the odour of the flowers that adorned the bosom of his mistress.'

From this association of ideas, however, music derives a power very much resembling imitation, and which has a very strong effect on the

'Some chord in unison with what we hear

'Is touch'd within us, and the heart replies.

'How soft the music of the evening bells

'Falling at intervals upon the ear

'In cadence sweet! Now dying all away,

'Now pealing loud again, and louder still

'Clear and sonorous as the gale comes on.

'With easy force it opens all the cells

'Where memory slept; wherever I have heard

'A kindred melody, the scene recurs,

'And with it all its pleasures.'

COWPER.

This kind of recollection resembles imitation in making pleasing objects afford additional pleasure, and in throwing some pleasure over melancholy objects, which last also will be equally destroyed in both if the sensation is too strong.

[R] Emilius, Vol. I. Part I.



passions. The *RANS DES VACHES*, mentioned by Rousseau in his Dictionary of Music, though without any thing striking in the composition, has such a powerful influence over the Swiss, and impresses them with so violent a desire to return to their own country, that it is forbidden to be played in the Swiss regiments in the French service, on pain of death. There is also another circumstance relating to music, which makes it in some instances more than imitation. Certain musical instruments are from custom constantly attendant on certain actions, as the organ on religion, and the drum and fife on war and its preparations; therefore when these instruments are heard, our ideas are not raised by association only, but as far as the sense of hearing is concerned an actual deception takes place. If my other senses do not undeceive me when I hear a drum and fife play a march, I conclude soldiers are marching by; and if I hear a choir and an organ, I imagine myself in or near a place of religious worship.

The absurd attempt to make 'the sound an echo to the sense,' by mentioning the names of musical instruments in language, and then accompanying that language with the sound of the instruments that are named, is very justly censured by Mr. Jackson of Exeter [s]. There is a ridiculous instance of a musical pun of this kind in a song of that agreeable composer, Dibden, in the *Padlock*, where, while Don Diego is singing 'Horns! horns! I defy you,' he is accompanied by French-horns.

The effect of music when combined with poetry, is also principally occasioned by association. The notion that the words of a song and its

[s] Preface to his Opera iv.



tune are particularly adapted to each other, often arises from constantly hearing them together. I will not dispute that some movements are more suited to one kind of poetry than another, or deny that an elegy and a drinking song require a different kind of music to accompany them; but undoubtedly the words of a song often stamp a character on the tune which of itself it would never have acquired. Since the popular song of Hosier's Ghost was written, how many sea songs have been put to the same tune? Would not a person be induced to think from this, that it was particularly adapted to maritime ideas? Yet it was originally composed for a song on a very different subject, which began 'Welcome, welcome, brother debtor.'

I am far, however, from meaning to assert that music has not strong powers of exciting our feelings, independent of the subject or the words it accompanies, or any kind of association whatever, and that there is no real difference between a jig and a dirge. A particular instance, something applicable to this, occurs to me. Dr. Armstrong, in his SKETCHES, asks 'Who was it that threw out those dreadful wild expressions of distraction and melancholy in LADY CULROSS'S DREAM, an old composition now I am afraid lost, perhaps because it was almost too terrible for the ear?' A modern collector of old ballads has however found the words, and tells us he can perceive nothing terrible in them.

The natural means of imitation possessed by poetry are few and weak, and are solely confined to the versification. Most of the verses quoted as proofs of its power in this respect, make more impression on the imagination than the ear. I am astonished how Mr. Harris [r] could give

[r] Discourse on Music, Poetry and Painting, page 73.



poetry the preference to music in its ability to imitate sound. I should very much doubt, should the strongest instance of verification conveying the sense by the sound, be repeated to a person of however good an ear, who was unacquainted with the language; if he would discover the imitation: but should the music of those two airs of Handel, which begin 'Hush, ye pretty warbling choir,' and 'Let the merry bells ring round,' be played to a person of the most irreligious ears, and the imitation would be instantly obvious.

But the powers of imitation by means of compact, which are possessed by poetry, are infinite; they are applicable to actions and passions, which they can follow through all their various forms and modifications; they can comprehend every being in nature or in art, animate or inanimate; and their nobler objects and extensive field of imitation more than compensate for any inferiority in the particular means [u].

But there is one species of poetical imitation, nearer to nature, and in every respect superior to those effected by any other art; I mean the modern drama well acted. In comedy, and the private life tragedy in prose, the representation is exact, it ceases to be imitation, it is the thing itself, and therefore, to judge by my own feelings, (I can have no other criterion to judge those of others,) such representations of scenes of terror and deep distress are dreadful, they press too nearly on the mind, the deception is for the time complete, the horror [v] of the scene is not softened by the apparent means of imitation so as to be pleasing. I rise from seeing such tragedies as *George Barnwell*, the *Fatal Curiosity* and

[u] See Gerard on Taste, Part i. Sect. iv.

[v] Chap. xxv. The means of imitation are as much or more liable to err from being too

[x] Encyclopedie, Art. Illusion, by Marmontel. See Note v, Chap. vi.



the Gamester, with nearly the same sensation as if I had been actually present at scenes of the same kind in real life.

In the higher tragedy, the blank verse, the [w] exalted personages, and the inadequacy of the theatrical [x] apparatus to the objects represented, sufficiently discover the means of imitation, and the most tragical catastrophe will not be always so affecting as to displease. I say not always, because there are, in my opinion, some cases where the distress may be too forcibly worked up even in the higher tragedy, but this will be examined more at large when we come to consider Aristotle's idea of the proper effect of tragedy, and the most perfect construction of tragic fable [y]. It is however obvious that our theatrical language and apparatus is infinitely more natural than that of the Grecian stage. And perhaps it may admit a doubt, whether even Aristotle, if he had seen a Garrick in Lear, or a Siddons in Isabella, would have given the preference to the unhappy catastrophe, or asserted that a tragedy attained its end by reading as well as in representation [z].

In

[w] It is true; the Bishop of Worcester says, 'Whatever be the unhappy incidents in the story of private men, it is CERTAIN they must take faster hold of the imagination, and of course impress the heart more forcibly when related of the higher characters in life.' *DIS- SERTATION ON THE PROVINCES OF THE DRAMA*, page 168; and this is corroborated by the quotation of the two concluding lines of the *Hippolytus* of Euripides. I have the utmost deference for the opinion of so elegant a critic and so pathetic a poet, but the direct contrary is to me so CERTAIN from my own feelings and experience, that I cannot acquiesce in it. 'Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed magis amica veritas.'

[x] See note III. on Chap. xi, and note I. on Chap. xxvi.

[y] See Note VII. Ch. XIII.

[z] Chap. xxvi. The means of imitation are as much or more liable to err from being too defective, or too apparent, than from the opposite quality; and this I take to have been the case with



[A] In comedy where the effect is cheerful, the complete delusion rather encreases the pleasure; and even in the serious comedy the present anxiety is alleviated by the certainty of a happy catastrophe.

## NOTE II.

## MARGITES.

FROM the account given of this fictitious personage by Suidas, and Eustathius, he must have been an absolute idiot, and therefore an improper object of ridicule even in the grossest and lowest kind of farce. But the fragments of the poem itself, which are quoted by Aristotle, Eth. L. vi. ch. viii. and by Plato, Alcibiad. ii. especially the last, give the outline of a character that would not be unfit for modern comedy.

[B] 'Nor skill to dig or plow, the gods impart;

' Unwise in all, he fail'd in every art.'—

' Much had he learn'd but all had learn'd amiss.'

The character of Mrs. Baynard, in Smollet's novel Humphrey Clinker, is something like the hint in the last line, 'She could read, and write, and with the ancient Greek tragedy. In the passage here referred to, it is probable that Aristotle means to compare the tragedy when read, with the epopee, and not with the same tragedy acted.

[A] Encyclopedie, Art. Illusion.

[B] Τὸνδ' ἄτ' ἄρ' σκαπλῆρα θεοὶ θέσαν ἔτ' ἀροτῆρα

Οὐτ' ἄλλως τι σοφόν, πάσης δ' ἡμάρτανε τέχνης—

Πολλ' ἡπίστατο ἔργα κακῶς δ' ἡπίστατο πάντα

sing,



‘sing, and play on the harpichord, and smatter French, and take a hand  
 ‘at whist, or ombre, but even these accomplishments she knew by halves,  
 ‘and excelled in nothing.’

It must be remarked, that though Aristotle says the Margites was in iambics, all the fragments we have are hexameters. But Hephæstion and M. Victorinus, quoted by Mr. Winstanley in a note, both observe that the iambics were mixed with hexameters.

## NOTE III.

AS HOMER THEREFORE WAS THE GREATEST POET ON SERIOUS  
 SUBJECTS, STANDING ALONE IN POINT OF EXCELLENCE, NOT  
 ONLY FROM THE GENERAL MERIT OF HIS IMITATIONS, BUT  
 FROM THE DRAMATIC FORM HE GAVE THEM, SO HE ALSO FIRST  
 TAUGHT THE PROPER SYSTEM OF COMEDY.

SO Lord Shaftesbury, ‘He (Homer) paints so as to need no inscrip-  
 ‘tion over his figures, to tell what they are or what he intends by them;  
 ‘a few words let fall on any slight occasion from any of the parties he in-  
 ‘troduces, are sufficient to denote their manners and distinct character.  
 ‘From a finger or a toe he can represent to our thoughts, the frame and  
 ‘fashion of a whole body. He wants no other help of art to personate  
 ‘his heroes, and make them living. There was no more left for tragedy  
 ‘to do after him than to erect a stage, and draw his dialogues and cha-  
 ‘racters into scenes, turning in the same manner upon one principal  
 ‘action, or event, with that regard to place, and time, which was suit-  
 ‘able to a real spectacle. Even comedy itself was adjudged to this great  
 ‘master,



‘master, it being derived from those parodies or mock humours of which  
 ‘he had given the specimen [c] in a concealed sort of raillery, inter-  
 ‘mixed with the sublime.’ ADVICE TO AN AUTHOR, Part I.  
 Sect. III.

## NOTE IV.

OF ALL VERSE THE IAMBIC IS MOST CALCULATED FOR  
 DISCOURSE.

THIS account of iambic verse, and its distinction from hexameter, is applicable to our rhymed and blank verse. All attempts to introduce rhyme into the drama, though aided by the melodious and flowing versification of Dryden, have failed. For to use the expression of Aristotle, nature herself had pointed out the proper measure. Dryden carried his predilection for rhyme so far as to make a tragedy in rhyme of *Paradise Lost*. Perhaps the best specimen we have of dramatic rhyme is in the dialogue of Henry and Emma. Prior is less scrupulous about confining his sense to the couplet than Pope, or even Dryden.

Whether blank or rhymed verse is the best adapted to the epopee, will be enquired elsewhere [D]. But there is a difference between epic and dramatic blank verse, the latter assuming a greater freedom of cadence, and the frequent use of one or two redundant syllables at the end of the line, of

[c] ‘Not only in his *Margites*, but even in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.’ Eustathius observes, that *Thersites* in the *Iliad*, and *Elpenor* in the *Odyssey*, are kind of sketches of the character which he drew more at large in the *Margites*.

[D] See Note IV. Chap. XXIV.

which



which the opening of the Fair Penitent is a good example. In this, as in every other province of the drama, Shakespear is unrivalled.

Mr. Maſon, in his Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Whitehead, (ſee page 59, et ſeq.) has given a good criticſm on the excellence of dramatic language; and in his poems of Elfrida and Caractacus, a compleat model for imitation.

THIS account of iambic verſe, and its diſtinction from hexameter, is applicable to all iambic and blank verſe. All attempts to introduce rhyme into the drama, are ſhewn to be the neceſſary and flowing very ſince the introduction of rhyme, the ſublimity of the iambic nature has been ſpoiled, and the proper meaſure of the drama precluded for rhyme. It is as to make a tragedy out of a comedy. Loſt. Perhaps the beſt ſpecimen we have of dramatic iambic, is the dialogue of Henry and Emma. Prior is leſs ſerious about conſtituting his ſenſe to the couplet than Pope, or even Dryden.

Whether blank or rhymed verſe is the beſt adapted to the epopee, will be enquired elſewhere [p. 1]. But there is a difference between epic and dramatic blank verſe, the latter admitting a greater freedom of cadence, and the frequent uſe of one or two redundant ſyllables at the end of the line, of the dramatic kind. The dramatic character on the ſtage and manner, is not only in the dramatic manner, but in the dramatic character. Not only in his Maſtice, but even in his Quilley. Luſtius obſerves, [p. 1] in the Maſtice, and Eſtice in the Quilley, the kind of character of the character which he ſhew here is large in the Maſtice. The dramatic character of the character is juſtly reſpected by Churchill.

CHAP.

which



## CHAP. V.

## NOTE.

RIDICULE IS PRODUCED BY ERRORS UNATTENDED BY DANGEROUS AND FATAL CONSEQUENCES; THUS DEFORMITY OF BODY IS RIDICULOUS, PROVIDED IT IS NOT OCCASIONED BY PAIN.

**MISTAKES** even in language, as blunders, and provincial and foreign dialects, are among the errors of this species, and are frequently used as a source of the ridiculous in modern farce, and even comedy; though I cannot agree with Lord Kaimes, as to the cause of this. ‘So quick-fighted’ (he says) ‘is pride in blemishes, and so willing to be gratified, that it takes up with the very slightest improprieties; such as a blunder by a foreigner in speaking our language, especially if the blunder can bear a sense that reflects on the speaker.’ **ELEMENTS OF CRITICISM, Vol. I. Ch. XII.**

As for deformity of body being an object of ridicule, it must be observed that Aristotle is here speaking of the old, or middle comedy, equivalent with our farce. Such as many of Foote’s pieces were, who, like Aristophanes, brought personal characters on the stage and marked them for public ridicule, not only by their habitual manners, but by bodily deformities, infirmities, and misfortunes; violating, without remorse, the latter part of the precept of the Stagirite. This liberty, or rather licentiousness of imitation, is justly reprobated by Churchill.

— ‘Mimics



— 'Mimics draw humour out of nature's fault,

' With personal defects their mirth adorn,

' And hang misfortunes out to public scorn.'

This humane qualification, as to the objects of personal ridicule, is strictly observed by Shakespear. A very ingenious critic observes, 'He has given him (Falstaff) every infirmity of body that is not likely to awaken our compassion, and which is most proper to render both his better qualities and his vices ridiculous.' *ESSAY ON THE DRAMATIC CHARACTER OF FALSTAFF*, Page 149 [A].

The rule of not sporting with serious misfortunes should be equally observed in comic narration. Indeed it is pointed out by nature; for he must have a heart little sensible of the feelings of humanity, who can find any thing ludicrous in the real distresses and sufferings of others, with whatever ridiculous circumstances they may be related. It is wonderful, that a people who boast so much of their refinement as the French, and whose delicacy cannot bear the exhibition of spectacles of suffering on the tragic scene for the purpose of exciting pity and terror, should approve the narration of such facts, when introduced to occasion mirth. And yet not only Scarron and Rabelais, the last of whom has described very minutely, a monk kicked to death by a vicious horse, as a laughable accident; but even the works of Le Sage, abound with instances of this kind. Savage as we have often been called by our politer neighbours, our comic writers are seldom guilty of this impropriety. We have, however, one flagrant instance of it in the works of an author of

[A] See also Beattie on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition, Ch. iii. p. 431.



undoubted comic excellence. I mean Arbuthnot's *Journal* of the six days preceding the death of the Bishop of Salisbury.

### NOTE II.

AMONG THE ATHENIANS, CRATES WAS THE FIRST WHO FORSOOK PERSONAL SATIRE, AND INTRODUCED A GENERAL SUBJECT OR FABLE.

FROM this passage it is obvious that every kind of comedy, in the time of Aristotle, was not like those of Aristophanes, generally founded on personal ridicule; [B] and not only from this but from his observation in the eleventh chapter, that comic poets first form the fable, and then add names correspondent with the manners of the characters; and still more particularly from his assertion, that a double catastrophe, like the *Odyssey*, where virtue is rewarded and vice punished, is better calculated for [C] comedy than tragedy. From these remarks, and especially the last, one would be induced to think, that comedy had assumed a higher character in the days of Aristotle than is usually ascribed to the old and middle comedy. The same idea has occurred to M. Lessing, who makes the following observation on it. 'The Stagirite had seen the origin of the new comedy, and he mentions it expressly in his treatise on ethics, addressed to Nicomachus, where he speaks of what is decent and what indecent in humorous conversation, "which (he says) may be illustrated by the example of the old, and new comedy, of which the

[B] Though many of the comedies of Aristophanes are not entirely personal; as the *Plutus*, the *Lyfistrata*, and the *Ecclesiazuzæ*. Yet they can hardly be said to have a general fable.

[C] See Note VIII. on Chap. XIII.

" humour



“humour of one consists in gross expressions, but that of the other arises  
 “rather from ambiguous language [D].” It might indeed be objected,  
 ‘that the middle comedy is here designed under the name of the new  
 ‘comedy [E]; for before the new comedy arose the middle comedy  
 ‘would necessarily have that appellation. It might farther be added,  
 ‘that Aristotle died in the same olympiad in which Menander produced  
 ‘his first piece, and even in the year before. (Eusebius in Chronico ad  
 ‘Olymp. C. xiv. 4.) But we are wrong in dating the new comedy  
 ‘from Menander only; he was the first poet of that age of comedy as  
 ‘to poetical excellence, but not as to time. Philemon, who belonged  
 ‘to it, wrote some time before, and the transition from the middle to the  
 ‘new comedy, was so imperceptible, that it is impossible Aristotle could  
 ‘have wanted models.’ DRAMATURGIE, VOL. II, PAGE 173 NOTE.

Mr. Cumberland in his account of the Greek comic theatre, for which  
 the republic of letters is much indebted to him, observes of Philemon,  
 ‘that he was some years elder than Menander, and no unworthy rival of  
 ‘that poet.’ (Observer, No. 138.) From the fragments of the middle  
 comedy, frequently quoted in the same work, it appears, that so far from  
 being devoted to indecency and buffoonry, that species of the drama  
 abounded in passages inculcating the noblest precepts of morality. But  
 the deduction of Mr. Cumberland from this [F], that Aristotle has not  
 given a just character of comedy as it stood in his time, by saying ‘it is

[D] Ἰδοὶ δ’ ἂν τις καὶ ἐκ τῶν κωμωδιῶν τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ τῶν καινῶν. Τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἦν  
 γελοῖον ἢ αἰσχρολογία, τοῖς δὲ μᾶλλον ἢ ὑπόνοια. ETHIC. L. IV. CAP. XIV.

[E] The name appears of little consequence as the difference is so strongly marked in the  
 quotation.

[F] OBSERVER, No. 72.

‘a picture



a picture of human nature worse and more deformed than the original, seems to arise from a mistake as to the idea intended to be conveyed by the word worse, considered in a poetical light. As Aristotle does not require the persons of tragedy to be better in a moral view, but only in the sense explained in note 1. on chap. 11. so the characters in comedy, on which its poetical distinction depends, are not, according to the observation at the beginning of this chapter, to be worse than those of the present time, as to depravity in general, but only to be more uniformly charged with those qualities calculated to excite laughter than is usually, or indeed ever met with in real life. That Achilles never said an absurd thing, or Therfites never acted wisely, or seriously, is out of common probability; but the poet who introduces these persons, or characters resembling them, on the tragic, or comic scene, would frustrate his own purpose if he shewed an instance of ridiculous absurdity in Achilles, or serious reasoning in Therfites; and in this sense, one is drawn better, and the other worse than human nature in general [G]. I believe this rule is observed by every tolerable dramatic poet, without any notion of acting according to the precepts of the Stagirite. But though this is the general distinction of the two provinces of the drama, it does not follow but there may be some characters in comedy not destitute of tragic dignity, as there were evidently parts of the Greek tragedy which had not only a comic but even a burlesque cast. Shakespear has not only blended tragedy and comedy in the same piece, but he often introduces a stroke of humour in a grave, though never I believe in a pathetic scene; and a trait of dignity in a ridiculous scene. But he always preserves the propriety of character. In the field at Shrewsbury, when Worcester and Vernon come to the king's camp just before the battle, he introduces a ridiculous farcafm on Worcester's excusing his rebellion as involuntary, but he puts

[G] See Note 1, Chap. xv.



it in the mouth of Falstaff [H]. And in the tavern at Eastcheap the Prince of Wales recollects the impropriety of his conduct, at so critical a period, and [I] blames himself with great spirit and dignity; but no such reflection is uttered by any other of the party. Yet though Shakespear has avoided this confusion of character, it would be the absurdest partiality to deny, that the mixing the serious and the comic, in one piece, tends to destroy the efficacy of both, and is therefore a fault. That the necessity of committing this fault was imposed on him by the taste of the public, is apparent, from the practice of all the cotemporary writers, and if he has contrived to do it with less impropriety than others, it surely is no small degree of merit.

However faulty the practice of the age of Shakespear may have been in this respect, it was reserved for the next, though proud of their encreasing refinement, to produce that monster of the drama, the regular tragi-comedy; where two distinct fables, the one distressful, the other ridiculous, were carried on together; not only violating the unity of action, but making so absurd a mixture of sorrow and mirth, that as Addison observes, a poet might as well think of weaving the adventures

[H] 'Rebellion lay in his way and he found it.'—1st Part HEN. IV. ACT V. SC. I.  
See Note VII, Ch. XIII.

[I] 'By heaven, Poins, I feel me much to blame,  
' So idly to profane the precious time,  
' When tempest of commotion like the North,  
' Borne with black vapour, doth begin to melt  
' And drop upon our bare unarmed heads.  
' Give me my sword and cloak.'—

11d Part HEN. IV. ACT II. SC. IV.

of



of Æneas and [K] Hudibras into one poem. This comic under-plot, was not confined to the plays of Dryden which end happily, as the Spanish Friar, Love Triumphant, and Marriage à la Mode; but it also mixed with the deep pathos of the Fatal Marriage, Venice Preserved, and Oronoko. The error of Shakespear is like that of Homer, in introducing Therfites in a serious poem, but the tragi-comedy resembles the Iliad and Margites, mixed together.

The following observation of Lord Kaims, in his Sketches of the History [L] of man, having some relation to this subject, I shall cite it with a short remark. • Nothing is more evident than the superiority of Terence above Plautus in the art of writing; and considering that Terence is a later writer, nothing would appear more natural, if they did not copy the same originals. It may be owing to genius that Terence excelled in purity of language, and propriety of dialogue; but how account for his superiority over Plautus in the construction and conduct of a play? It will not certainly be thought that Plautus would imitate the worst constructed plays, leaving the best to those who should come after him. This difficulty has not occurred to any of the commentators, so far as I can recollect. Had the works of Menander and his cotemporaries been preserved, they probably would have explained the mystery; which for want of that light will probably remain a mystery for ever. I own I can perceive no mystery at all in this. It did not depend on the taste of Plautus, or Terence, but on the taste of the Roman people when they wrote. Plautus composed for the public at large, who were best

[K] Imoinda and the Widow Laekit, Jaffier and Antonio, are more discordant characters, both in manners and action, than Æneas and Hudibras.

[L] Book I. Sketch v. Sect. 2.

pleased



pleased with the broader humour of the earlier Greek comedy. Terence wrote at a later period and under the patronage of Scipio, and the [M] mild Lælius, whose more refined taste preferred the insipid elegance of Menander. Shakespear was guilty of the same error in judgement, if it was one. It appears from the account of those classic writers which were translated in his time, that the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, and the *Andrian* of Terence, were both before him, and we know which he chose for a model. As for the superiority of Terence over Plautus in any respect except beauty of language, it remains to be proved, and perhaps is no more capable of proof, than the superior excellence of the modern sentimental comedy to those less regular dramas, *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*. Were the plays of the two Roman comic poets to be clothed in an English dress, and performed before an English audience, near the close of the eighteenth century, by no means surely an age or a country of barbarism, I have little doubt of the judgement being in favor of the elder poet. To return more particularly to the difficulty suggested by Lord Kaimes. It must be remembered that the poems of Homer were equally open to Ennius and Lucretius, as to Virgil; and yet the last is the first Roman poet who imitated, I had almost said translated, the works of the father of poetry. Of the comedies of Menander we can only judge through the medium of Terence, whose dramas, to me, have neither humour nor interest, nor indeed any other merit than their style, 'which,' (to use words applied, perhaps with rather too much severity to Virgil, by a very ingenious though eccentric writer) 'is pure and exquisite, and is the pickle that has preserved his mummy from corruption [N].'

[M] 'Mitis sapientia Læli.'

Hor.

[N] HERON'S LETTERS OF LITERATURE.



## NOTE III.

TRAGEDY ENDEAVOURS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO CONFINE ITSELF TO ONE REVOLUTION OF THE SUN, OR ONLY TO EXCEED IT A LITTLE.

FROM this plain direction, the critics of the French school, and especially Dacier, have deduced that the action should not exceed the exact time of representation, and have found out that one [o] period or revolution of the sun comprises twelve hours, which would be, at least, four times that length. That people urged by superstition, or worse motives, should wish to give the most absurd and contradictory sense to plain and obvious passages in writings of sacred authority, to support their own systems, when we consider the force of enthusiasm and ambition, is more to be lamented than wondered at. But such a strange perversion of common sense, to justify a dramatic prejudice, is at once an object of surprize and ridicule. If the practice of the Greek tragedy had been always in strict conformity with this rule of the French critics, there would have been some shadow of reason for their trying to accommodate this precept of Aristotle to the custom of the ancient stage; but on the contrary, the [p] Greek tragedians often assume a greater latitude than

[o] *Μίαν περίοδον ἡλίου.* See note II, chap. vii. for some further observations on Aristotle's definition of the unity of time.

[p] For examples of the violation of the unities of time and place, (Aristotle says nothing of the last) by the Greek dramatic poets, the curious reader is referred to METASTASIO'S *ES-TRATTO DELLA POETICA D'ARISTOTILE.* See also *ELEMENTS OF CRITICISM*, Chap. xxiii. *passim.*

the



the rule laid down by Aristotle, or even the nature of the thing itself will justify.

The words of Dacier, on the supposed invariable adherence of the ancients to this strict unity of time, are these. 'They have made it so indispensable a law, that to avoid violating it they have sometimes done violence to the incidents.' Which Mr. Twining observes is in fact saying, 'that they have so scrupulously adhered to the rule, that sometimes, for the sake of observing it, they have been obliged to break it.' But they have done much more, there is a unity of time marked by nature, the breach of which destroys the probability of every fictitious tale whatever, either narrative or dramatic. I may conceive days, and months, and years, to have passed during an interval in a representation, which I know to be a representation, and not a reality; but every shadow of probability vanishes, and we are instantly disgusted, either, when without any interruption of the action during a dialogue of six minutes, six hours are supposed to have elapsed, or, (which is nearly the same thing,) when the space of time occupied by the drama is exactly defined, and then incidents are crowded into it which could not possibly have happened in that space [Q].

[Q] This absurdity is well described by M. Lessing. 'Do not you admire the conduct of the piece? it is in general so complicated that it would be a miracle if so many things had happened in so short a time. The ruin or preservation of an empire, the marriage of a prince, the destruction of a prince, all this is executed in the twinkling of an eye. The affair is opened in the first act, it is connected and strengthened in the second, every measure is taken, every obstacle removed, and the conspirators arranged in the third, then follows a revolt, a fight, perhaps a pitched battle, and this you call conduct, interest, fire, and probability.'

DRAMATURGIE, Vol. i. p. 139.



In the ancient drama, where the action was never interrupted, and the stage continually occupied by the chorus, I must think that probability is really in some measure violated when the supposed time of action is at all extended beyond the actual time of representation. Of this the supplants of Euripides afford us a striking instance. Theseus marches from Athens to Thebes, gains a complete victory, and a messenger returns to give an account of the battle, during a short lyric dialogue between his mother Æthra and the Chorus. I appeal to any unprejudiced judge if the conduct of Shakespear, who most likely would have transported us to Thebes, and made us spectators of the battle, has any thing so really contrary to probability as this, or if any thing can be more unreasonable than the rules of those critics, who, because Aristotle allowed the period of twenty-four hours, or a little longer, to a drama without intervals, would, on that very authority, confine a drama with intervals to three hours[s].

[s] Le Pere Brumoy, though a staunch advocate for the doctrine of the French school as to the rigid observance of the unity of time, has this mitigating sentence, 'As the resemblance between the drama and nature cannot be always so exact as not to admit some difference in favour of the beauties of art, even art, to avail itself of these beauties, may deceive the spectator, and represent an action whose duration comprehends eight or ten hours, although the drama employs only two or three.' Now though the Pere Brumoy mentions particular periods of time in which the dramatic fable, on certain great occasions, may exceed the dramatic representation, as we cannot suppose he mentions eight or ten hours in contradistinction to nine and eleven, his meaning must be, that this rule may be broken when the observation of it ceases to be necessary, and that truth and general probability are the only proper judges of this law, since, as Horace allows,

Utor permisso, caudæque pilos ut equinæ

Paulatim yello, et demo unum, demo etiam unum.

But



But though the modern drama, from the breaks in the representation, by the division of acts and change of scene, has not its duration marked out by the nature of its composition, yet if the period of time is defined by any circumstance whatever, and events are supposed to happen in that period, which it is either physically or morally impossible could have happened, the error is against truth and nature, and not only against the arbitrary or the reasonable laws of the drama; and, it must be confessed, we sometimes find our own inimitable dramatic Bard erring in this respect. The tragedy of King Lear will furnish an instance of this kind of error. In the second act, Lear comes in, with all his train, to Regan at Gloucester's castle, having been recently affronted by Goneril. From the circumstance of the storm continuing, it is obvious that the interval between the second and third act, does not comprehend a period of time, much exceeding that which really passes, and the eyes of Gloucester are put out on the same night, just as he had relieved the old king on the heath; yet in this time we hear, 'there is part of a power already footed  
' to revenge the injuries the king now bears;' and Cornwall says, 'the  
' army of France is now landed.' This rule of natural unity is equally essential to the drama, the epopee, the fable, and the tale; it has nothing to do with the most striking flights of improbability. If a writer puts his hero on a magic courser that can

Put a girdle round about the earth

In forty minutes,

it is no offence against this rule; but it would be a great one to make an army march from London to Edinburgh in one night.

I have somewhere met with an observation, that the time of the representation and the fable, in the tragedy of Cato, might have been made  
exactly



exactly equal, and the strictest rule of dramatic unity observed, had not Addison chosen, wantonly, to violate it by opening the play with a description of the morning; and making Juba say of Cæsar's army, in the last act,

——— 'The setting sun

'Plays on their shining arms and burnish'd helmets.'

Addison certainly was not obliged to mark the time in this manner; but whether he had or not, it must have been impossible to conceive the business of the play could have been transacted in a shorter time, than between sun-rise and sun-set, in the longest day, at Utica.

Of the unity of place, it has already been observed, Aristotle says nothing. However, it is strongly connected with the unity of time, and depends on it: I mean the natural unities; not that artificial rule of never altering the supposed spot of representation [r], because the Greek theatre never changed its scenes, which is about as reasonable as it would be not to wear shirts because the ancients had no linen. During the continuance of the action, or when the exact time is otherwise defined, no greater change of place can be supposed, than what might probably happen in such a period [u].

But it may possibly be asked, though the Muse of Shakespear has ventured to 'pass the bounds of time and space,' and therefore a change of scene is necessary for the representation of his dramas; yet as 'no

[r] See note 1, chap. xvii.

[u] For a further illustration of this, see the application of the unities to the epopee, note 11, chap. xxiv. See also *Philological Enquiries*, page 218.



modern poet ventures to extend his length of time beyond the period prescribed by Aristotle, why may not the strict unity of place be observed on the English stage, as well as on the French stage? Perhaps it might be a sufficient answer to this, to say, the [v] taste of the English demands this change of scenes, but I will not rest my defence of the practice of our stage on this, or on the superiority of the theatrical decoration from a variety of well painted [w] scenes, but from the superior probability of the play, and the removal of one great and unformountable, or, at least, as yet unfurmounted difficulty attending the strict observance of the unity of place, the bringing in and sending out the characters with propriety. And I chuse to do this, in the words of a writer, who cannot be influenced by national prejudices, in favour of either the French or English theatre [x]. 'To confess the truth, the English,

[v] Of the taste of the English in this respect, the following anecdote is a striking proof. In the play of Phædra and Hippolytus, the author has observed the unity of place so well, that all the scenes are exhibited in one spot, in an outer court of the palace. Mr. Garrick saw this; he had a good scene prepared, and it stood the whole time of the play. The manager was right; critics will say, the author was right, but the audience were disgusted. HILL'S ACTOR, page 255. However much the manager might think himself in the right, he found it prudent, on a subsequent occasion, to change his conduct. Mr. Whitehead, in his SCHOOL FOR LOVERS, observed the strict unity of place, and the whole action passes in a garden; but Mr. Garrick introduced a change of scene in the representation, and he concludes his prologue to the comedy, after some humorous observations on the taste of the audience and the perseverance of the poet, with these lines:

'Still he persists—and let him—ENTRE NOUS

'I know your tastes, and will indulge them too.

'Change you shall have; so set your hearts at ease;

'WRITE as HE will, we'll ACT it as YOU please.'

[w] See note v, chap. vi.

[x] Schlegel, a German dramatic poet, cited by M. Lessing in his Dramaturgie, vol. ii. p. 215.

who



who do not pride themselves in observing the unity of place, observe it for the most part better than the French, who boast so much of their strict adherence to the rules of Aristotle. It little imports, that the decoration of the scene does not change, but it is of consequence that the reason should be obvious why the persons who enter should find themselves exactly in that given spot, instead of remaining where they were. When a character behaves as the inhabitant and master of an apartment, where, just before, another has been assuming the same appearance of authority, and talking with the greatest confidential freedom to his friend, without its being brought about by any probable means; in short, when the characters come into the room, or the garden, merely to appear on the stage, the author of the tragedy would do better, instead of writing, "the scene is in the chamber of Climene," to say, "the scene is in the theatre." Or, to speak seriously, it certainly would be more reasonable, if the author, according to the English custom, had changed the scene from one house to another, and conducted the spectator to the hero, instead of obliging the hero to appear in a place where he has nothing at all to do, for the purpose of amusing the spectator.

The false reasoning of the French critics, and their followers in this country, has arisen from the mistaken notion that dramatic imitation ever was, or ever could be a real deception. We are affected by the general probability of the incidents arranged by the poet, in such a manner as to render the impression of those he intends should work on the passions, most forcible, by softening, or suppressing, every circumstance which might at all interfere with the passions he wishes to excite; and this, when accompanied by the recitation and action of a good player, must have the strongest effect on the spectator; but as to real deception,



deception, in the most impassioned scene of Lear, acted by Garrick, it never for an instant existed. The means of imitation were always apparent, or, to speak in the language of a late commentator, 'It is false that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramatic fable, in its materiality, was ever credible, or, for a single moment, was ever credited [B].'

[A] Dr. Johnson's preface to Shakespear.

T  
C H A P.



## CHAP. VI.

## NOTE II.

TRAGEDY IS AN IMITATION, IN ORNAMENTED LANGUAGE, OF AN ACTION IMPORTANT AND COMPLETE, AND POSSESSING A CERTAIN DEGREE OF MAGNITUDE, HAVING ITS FORMS DISTINCT IN THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTS, AND BY THE REPRESENTATION OF PERSONS ACTING, AND NOT BY NARRATION, EFFECTING THROUGH THE MEANS OF PITY AND TERROR, THE PURGATION OF SUCH PASSIONS.

VARIOUS and contradictory have been the explanations given by different commentators of this celebrated definition of tragedy; and yet the grand object it proposes to have in view, the purgation of the passions by the means of pity and terror, and how those means operate to attain that end, or whether, in fact, they have any such operation at all, has received little elucidation from their combined enquiries. To entertain any hope of success where so many persons of the highest literary reputation have failed, would be a great degree of presumption. I shall therefore only state, with all the diffidence due where so little is certainty, and so much conjecture, what appears to me, from all that can be collected on the subject, the real notion of Aristotle as to the means and the effect of purging the passions; and enquire how far that notion is founded in nature and confirmed by experience; allowing for the lapse of time, and the consequent alteration of manners and opinions.



Any obscurity in an author, especially if it relates to his particular judgment on any general subject [A], will be most likely to receive light from comparison with his other works, of which our critic has left us an ample store. Indeed, these have been so long, and so universally, the objects of scholastic disquisition, that one should have imagined every correspondent, and every discordant passage, would have long since been collated and examined. But as M. Lessing (who strongly [B] recommends this method of illustration,) observes, their pursuits were very different from the investigation of elegant literature. Those writings of the Stagirite which, at the present time, are the principal subjects of enquiry, and especially the Poetic, had little to engage the attention of men devoted to the study of logic and metaphysics: and, perhaps, there are few of those whose turn of mind induces them to make the treatise before us the particular object of their attention, who would have the patience and perseverance, to go through the various and voluminous works of Aristotle, which treat of matters so foreign to their taste. There is one treatise, however, on a congenial subject, (the Rhetoric) which throws light on the imperfect and mutilated state of the Poetic in a hundred instances.

But the present subject of our enquiry receives most elucidation from a work where we should less expect to find it. The philosopher [C], in his treatise on government, speaking of the power of music to soften and alleviate the passions, says; ‘ Whatever passions have a strong effect

[A] In regard to verbal obscurity, this will often be fallacious. Aristotle has frequently employed the same word in different senses, even in this short sketch. SEE NOTE III. ch. I.

[B] DRAMATURGIE, Vol. II. p. II.

[C] POLITIC, l. viii. chap. vii.



on any minds, will have some effect on all, and they will only differ in degree. Such passions, for example, as pity and terror, to which we may add enthusiasm, an affection of the mind with which some men are violently possessed. Now we see this last, when those sacred melodies which accompany the celebration of the mystic rights are performed, is soothed and quieted, as if it were by medicine or purgation; and the same thing will happen to those who are liable to the impressions of pity or terror, or whose passions in general are easily excited, and others indeed as far as they may be under the influence of such passions. They will all feel a kind of purgation, or unburthening of the mind, accompanied by some degree of pleasure.

Aristotle is treating here only of the purgation of the passions, as effected by music, and [D] which he professes to explain in a slight and superficial manner, with a promise to be more explicit in his writings on poetry: if this promise has ever been fulfilled, it is generally supposed it must have been in some of those parts of his criticism on poetry which are lost. But [E] M. Lessing is of opinion, that it is compleatly fulfilled in the Poetic, as we now have it. If this is the case, I have

[D] Τι δὲ λέγομεν τὴν καθάρσιν, νῦν μὲν ΑΠΛΩΣ, πάλιν δ' ἐν τοῖς περὶ ΠΟΙΗΤΙΚΗΣ ἐροῦμεν ΣΑΦΕΣΤΕΡΟΝ.

[E] 'Aristotle, at the conclusion of his Treatise on Government, where he speaks of the purgation of the passions by music, promises to treat of this purgation with more perspicuity in his Poetic. "But (Corneille says,) since we see nothing at all of this matter there, most of the interpreters think that we have it not complete." Nothing at all? For my part I think that I find, even in what remains of the Poetic, every thing that he could consider, as necessary to say on the subject to any one who was not ignorant of the principles of his philosophy.'

DRAMATURGIE, Vol. II. p. 28.

only



only to lament my own ill fortune in not finding it; or my stupidity in not comprehending it.

The above quotation, from the Treatise on Government, however, if it does not itself receive much illustration from this, or any other part of the Poetic now extant, seems to throw some light on the passage under consideration, and affords some clue for the discovery of what Aristotle means by purging the passions. His example of the enthusiast having his mind relieved by sounds congenial, though in a milder degree, with his own more violent feelings, leads us to suppose, that he conceives the excessive, habitual effects of pity and terror, and other passions of the same kind [F], may also be alleviated by exciting them in a more moderate degree, through the apparently fictitious means of dramatic imitation.

Mr. Harris [G], perhaps, carries the efficacy of tragic imitation a little too far, when he supposes it capable of blunting the feelings, by frequent representation of scenes of terror and distress, in the way the realities act on military men, physicians, and surgeons. Yet, however, much allowance must be made for the difference of manners, and habits. The drama might have had an effect on the people of Athens, who made an attendance on the theatre almost the business of their lives,

[F] Aristotle confines this effect to pity and terror, and affections of the same kind (among which he includes enthusiasm,) in express words, using τῶν τοιούτων, in both places. Such passions as love and anger, are enflamed instead of softened by the same means.

[G] Discourse on Music, Poetry, and Painting, chap. v. note c.



which we can have no idea of. 'We know (says M. Lessing [H]) to what a degree the Greeks and Romans carried their passion for public spectacles, and the first more especially for tragedy; and, on the contrary, how indifferent and cold our people are in regard to the theatre. Whence arises this difference, if not from the Greeks finding themselves affected with such strong and extraordinary [I] feelings, during the representation, that they waited with transport the moment of their return? On the contrary, the impressions we receive at the theatre are so trivial, and so weak, that we scarcely esteem them worth the time and expence it costs to procure them. We almost all, and almost always go, either from curiosity, or because it is the fashion, or for want of something else to do, or for the sake of company, or to see and be seen; very few go with other views, and those but seldom.'

[H] Though M. Lessing speaks of the Germans, it is full as applicable to the people of this country. Indeed, he himself adds, 'I say WE, OUR PEOPLE, OUR THEATRE, but I do not mean to be understood as speaking only of the Germans. For we freely acknowledge that as yet we have no theatre.'

[I] This must have arisen from the sensibility of the people, rather than the superior effect of the drama. The satire of M. Lessing is directed against the insipidity of the French tragedy; for he puts the Greek and English stage together, and classes Shakespear with Euripides and Sophocles: and yet it is impossible for any people to be less interested in the amusements of the theatre than we are. The truth seems to be, that the constant attendance of the Athenian people on the theatre, arose from the splendor of the exhibition, and its being at the public charge; and that the superior effect of the representation on their minds, was the consequence, not the cause, of their strong attachment to tragic imitation. The Romans were, as M. Lessing allows, equally attached to spectacles, though of another kind; and yet they have never been particularly characterized for strong and extraordinary feelings; nor were their favourite exhibitions calculated to excite them.

It



It remains now to enquire how far our passions are really blunted or softened, by being excited in a fainter degree, through the fictions of tragedy. Or whether, on the contrary, they are not, at least sometimes, rather heightened and enflamed by them. Indeed, this was a point at issue in the time of Aristotle, and had, before him, been decided contrary to his opinion, by Plato, who banished poets from his republic on this account. His expression on this head I shall give in the words of M. Twining's translation, together with his observation on it [K].

"The habit of indulging our passions, in the concerns of others, will, of necessity, bring on the same habitual indulgence in those which relate to ourselves: for he who has nourished and strengthened to excess, the passion of pity for example, by habitual sympathy with the misfortunes of others, will not find it easy to restrain the same kind of feelings in his own." "To this objection there cannot be a more direct and pointed answer than Aristotle's assertion, as usually understood, that the habit of indulging the emotions of pity or terror, in the fictitious representations of tragedy, tends, on the contrary, to moderate and refine those passions when they occur in real life."

TWINING'S NOTES ON ARISTOTLE, note 45, p. 240.

That this doctrine of Aristotle is intended as an answer to the objection of Plato, is confirmed, if any confirmation were necessary, by its being first started in his own treatise on a republic.

It may seem great arrogance even to attempt to decide, when such doctors as Plato and Aristotle disagree. But as they are both defending

[K] Ἀπολαύειν ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων εἰς τὰ δικάσια. Θρέψαντα γὰρ ἐν ἐκείνοις ἰσχυρὸν τὸ ἐλεεινὸν, οὐ ρᾶδιον ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς πάθεσι κατέχειν. Plato de Rep. l. x. Ed. Seran.

1602. p. 756. B.



a favorite hypothesis, they may possibly each be partly right, and partly wrong. Much must depend on the different feelings of individuals, as well as of nations, these depending on habits of mind and body, profession, or education, and those on the form of government, and degree of civilization, and refinement. The soldier will be affected differently from the mechanic, the polished from the rude, the indolent from the active. And the inhabitant of London, or Paris, will certainly have different sensations of pity and terror, from the inhabitant of the deserts of Arabia, or the woods of America.

When the objects of pity or terror, whether real or imaginary, press so strongly on our sensations as to exclude any sentiment of pleasure, they will, in my opinion, have rather a tendency to increase than diminish the natural force of those passions, and this will often depend on the firmness of the mind, or the ductility of the imagination. But when the excitement of these passions is accompanied by any degree [L] of pleasure, however slight, the mind will acquire gradual strength to bear stronger representations by habitual exercise, till at length, as possibly was the case with the people of Athens, the sensations might attain such a state as to require encreasing force of terror and distress, to awaken the sensibility so as to cause that agitation, which is the source

[L] Hume, in one of his essays, observes, that the pleasure of being out of danger, and near it, (which he exemplifies by standing on the edge of a precipice, so as to be perfectly safe) is a species of terror so modified as to be perfectly pleasing. Now to a seaman, or a mountaineer, this would convey no idea at all of terror; and I know a person who would feel a greater dread from it, than if exposed to the most imminent danger in any other form whatever, and which, consequently, could not be attended with the slightest semblance of pleasure.

of



of the delight we receive from tragic imitation. And in this situation the mind may be something deadened to the same impressions, though occasioned by circumstances in real life.

As we can only judge of the opinion of Aristotle, and how far it is really founded on nature, by our own sensations, or our observation of the sensations of others, we are much at a loss where to look for these means of decision. Dramatic representation, we have already observed, neither occupies the time or attention enough to have any great, or permanent energy, on our passions; and the perusal of tragedies, or other compositions of a congenial cast, is considered in general as the amusement of an idle hour, ready to be thrown aside in a moment on the arrival of the newspaper, or the summons to the card table. The only persons of the present day, who at all devote their attention with ardor and perseverance to the reading compositions of fictitious distress, (and I believe their number, especially among the higher ranks, decreases every day,) are those usually called romantic young women, who dedicate much of their time to the study of the numerous tales, with which the press continually furnishes our circulating libraries. It is not my business here to enquire how this kind of application may influence their opinions, and conduct in life; but it certainly seems likely to throw some light on the influence a serious attention to scenes of imitated passion, may have on the force of real passion. And here we must confess, the first appearance is against the doctrine of the critic; the general effect of novel-reading on the gentler sex is too obvious to be doubted; it excites and enflames the passion which is the principal subject of the tale, and the susceptibility of the female votary of the circulating library, is proverbial. But we must, in the first place, recollect, that the passion of



love is very different in itself from terror and pity, though it may be the cause of circumstances replete with both [M]; and it is the tendency to this passion, and not to those of pity and terror, which is encreased by this kind of reading. Besides, it is not perhaps so much the passion itself that is enflamed, as the wish to feel it is created by this study. A desire of resembling the fictitious heroine of a novel, has often induced a young mind to enquire for those sensations, which, without such a search, might have continued for some time dormant in the bosom. So far, therefore, is love from being blunted by imitative fiction, that such fiction is often an efficient cause of its being first excited.

But, in the next place, is it so clear that the passion, of pity at least, (the terrible is seldom admitted in a novel,) is not purged and blunted in these very susceptible minds? The reasoning of Aristotle seems to be this: the mind that has been awakened and agitated by the calamities of *Cædipus*, *Orestes*, or *Merope*; that sees high rank and exalted character so far from exempting their possessors from pain and distress, only add accumulated weight to their sufferings, will be apt, from constant attention to such scenes, to feel less from the contemplation of similar incidents in real life, which are seldom attended with those complicated and unallayed distresses which attend the fiction of the poet, whose business it is to select every circumstance proper to excite the passions of pity and terror in the highest degree, and omit every event that might at all tend to alleviate or divert them. That such are the characters Aristotle points out as proper for tragedy, appears from the thirteenth chapter.

[M] The advantage modern tragedy draws from love, considered in this light, will be examined in another place. See Note IV. chap. XIII.

And



And Beni, in consequence of this, renders τῶν τοσούτων παθημάτων, 'the passions of such persons, i. e. σπουδαίων, as implied in σπουδαίας,' paraphrasing it thus. 'As it was the object of comedy to expose and correct the foibles of private persons, so it was that of tragedy to instance those in persons of higher rank, and who were invested with authority.'

My opinion of the idea of Aristotle receives the strongest corroboration from the fragment of Timocles, an Athenian comic poet, quoted by Mr. Cumberland, in the Observer, No. 106.

Yet hear me speak. Man is, of living beings,  
By nature most unhappy. Life to him  
Brings many a bitter pang. Then for your woes  
This consolation seek. He finds oblivion  
Of his own griefs, whose susceptible heart  
Is gently drawn to feel another's sufferings,  
And finds instruction mingled with delight.  
Turn to the tragic muse, and meet relief  
In every scene. If "steep'd in poverty"  
"Up to the lips;" there Telephus shall shew  
A monarch poorer, and console your want.  
Say, Are you mad? Behold Alcmaeon's frenzy.  
Are your eyes dim? Lo the Phineida blind!  
Is your son dead? The loss of Niobe  
Shall lighten yours. Or, are you old and wretched?  
Learn from Oeneus. If unnumber'd ills  
Worse than all these should press you, he who turns



His thoughts on other's miseries, will know  
With patience more resign'd, to bear his own [N].

On the same principle with this mode of reasoning, (and I see no cause to question the justness of it) may not the young woman, who is for ever weeping over the distresses of a Clarissa, or a Sydney Biddulph, and tracing the affecting scenes, and wonderful revolutions, to be found in the adventures of a Cecilia, or an Emmeline, have her feelings something deadened to the less interesting distresses of ordinary life; or, to use the words of Aristotle, with some paraphrase, may not the passion of pity be purged of some of its more violent effects in reality, from being frequently excited for amusement by fictitious tales [O] of woe. Much

[N] I ought, perhaps, to apologize to the reader for substituting a version of my own, for the elegant translation of Mr. Cumberland. But my purpose required a closer copy of the original; especially in the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th lines, which correspond so exactly with the opinion of Aristotle.

Παραψυχὰς ἐν φρόντιδων ἀνεύρατον

Τάυτας, ὁ γὰρ νοῦς τῶν ἰδίων λήθην λαβὼν

Πρὸς ἄλλοτριῷ τε ψυχᾷ γωγυθεὶς πάθει

ΜΕΘ' ἩΔΟΝΗΣ ἀπῆλθε, παιδευθεὶς ἅμα.

[O] May I be allowed to quote a former attempt of my own, to support this opinion?

Awake to each fictitious feeling grown,

And moved by ills to real life unknown;

The mind, with scenes of fabled woe possess'd,

Will shut to homely grief the senseless breast,

And turn from want and pain the offended ear,

To pour for feign'd distress the barren tear.

PROGRESS OF REFINEMENT.

Perhaps the effect of comic imitation may, in some measure, illustrate this subject. Does not the representation of ridiculous characters and incidents, heightened beyond what we ever find in reality, blunt in some degree the force of ridicule on characters in life, which are never so truly laughable as the fictitious ones: for as Longinus observes, laughter is a passion, though a pleasing one. Καὶ γὰρ ὁ γελοῦς πάθος ἐν ἡδονῇ. Long. sect. xxxviii. See also

Note xiv. on chap. xxv.

Before

has



has been said of the tear of sensibility, and I own I should have little opinion of the head or heart of any person, and especially of a woman, that could laugh over Clarissa, or sit with dry eyes, while Mrs. Siddons was acting Isabella or Belvidera. But these tears are the means, and not the end; or, to pursue the medical metaphor of Aristotle, they are the operation of the medicine, and not its final effect; neither are these feelings always a test of real humanity. Rousseau observes somewhere, that 'the tears which we shed for fictitious sorrow, are admirably adapted to make us proud of all the virtues we do not possess.' Some very humane and benevolent men are fond of being present at executions; and others will feel for distress on the stage, without having, in reality, any humanity at all. Plutarch, in his Life of Pelopidas, and in his treatise on the Fortune of Alexander, relates an anecdote of Alexander, king of Phærea, one of the most cruel tyrants of antiquity, who, on being moved to tears by the representation of a tragedy of Euripides, left the theatre with confusion, ashamed to discover, that he who was insensible to the sufferings of his people, should be so strongly affected by the distresses of [P] Hecuba and Andromache.

[P] These are the characters Plutarch mentions in the Life of Pelopidas, where he names the Troades as the tragedy: but in the treatise on the Fortune of Alexander, he names Hecuba and Polyxena, which last character is not in the Troades, but in the tragedy of Hecuba.

Mr. Upton, in his note on this line in Hamlet,

'What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,'

observes, that it is plain Shakespear alludes to this anecdote, which, considering how much Shakespear appears to be conversant with Plutarch, (all of whose works were translated in his time) seems highly probable. Though there is a considerable difference in the application, as the emotion of a performer is mentioned by Shakespear, and Alexander was a spectator. If Hamlet himself had been moved by the recital, it would have been more germane to the allusion.



Before I conclude this part of my subject, I will hazard a quotation from a very intelligent financier and statesman, (M. Pinto) on the effect of the universal prevalence of cards on modern manners, as I conceive it is by no means foreign to our present enquiry. It is part of a letter, printed at the end of his treatise on Circulation and Credit. 'The magic of cards forms a common focus of almost all the passions in miniature. They all find there, if I may use the expression, their proper food. It is true that every thing there is microscopic, and more illusive than common illusions are; a confused idea of happiness and misery is found there. The sphere of the passions is reduced, concentrated, and drawn into a narrower circle; all the passions in a manner entangle themselves, evaporate and spend themselves at a distance from their source and their proper object; restlessness, leisure, idleness, avarice and ambition, devour in common an unsubstantial food, which enervates their force and their activity.'

THE ESSAY ON THE END OF TRAGEDY, ACCORDING TO ARISTOTLE, by professor Moore, of Glasgow, which is mentioned by Mr. Twining, is an ingenious, but unsuccessful attempt to reconcile this passage with his own hypothesis, that the end of tragedy is the awakening the mind, to a sense of the evils attending errors of conduct in human life, and to cause, by the pity and terror they occasion, an exemption or removal of such calamities from themselves. I once had the book, but as it was at a time when I had no particular interest in its contents, it made but a slight impression on my mind, and having lost it, I have never been able to procure a second copy. His chief argument, I remember, rests on *παθηματα*, being generally used not for passions, but actual misfortunes; and he cites various instances from Aristotle and other writers.

But



But though there can be no reasonable doubt, I think, of the meaning of Aristotle, yet it by no means follows, but that the hypothesis of Dr. Moore, though not that of Aristotle, may be still more congenial with modern tragedy, whose end I cannot conceive to be the purging of the passions of pity and fear. But this will be much more fully treated of, when we come to speak of Aristotle's opinion of the proper tragic catastrophe.

## NOTE II.

SOME PARTS ATTAIN THEIR END BY VERSE ALONE, AND

OTHERS HAVE THE ASSISTANCE OF MUSIC.

IT seems impossible for any thing to be more clearly expressed than this; for Aristotle, contrary to his general custom, has been particularly careful in defining the precise meaning of the two words he uses, μέτρον and μέλος; and he also expressly says, they are employed separately. Yet notwithstanding this, many critics are decidedly of opinion, that the Greek tragedies were sung throughout, and the distinction between the dialogue and the choral odes, was exactly the same with that between the recitative and the airs in the Italian opera; and, in support of this opinion, they draw many arguments from the accounts given by ancient writers on the manner of performing the Greek tragedy. Being not very well acquainted with the technical language of the music of my own country, I cannot be supposed to be a critic in that of Greece. Under this disadvantage, it is with diffidence I attempt to reconcile this positive declaration of Aristotle, with those passages in other writers, which appear to contradict it, and which the reader will find in Metastasio's ESTRATTO DELLA POETICA.

The



The ancient theatres [Q] were of such a vast extent, besides being open at the top, that it was impossible for the human voice to fill them in its natural pitch; in consequence of which, it was absolutely necessary to employ artificial means to encrease its force, and the dramatic [R] mask was invented, which, in some measure, acted as a speaking trumpet: but as this must destroy all natural modulation of the voice, it was found necessary to supply this defect by an [s] artificial notation of sound, and to render this more distinct and loud, it was very probably attended by some slight instrumental accompaniment, but solely for the purpose of encreasing and regulating the sound of the voice, and not to produce any musical effect; and this was equally applicable to the [T] quick repartee of the dialogue, as to the longer monologue. It must be observed, that Aristotle does not simply say, that tragedy EMPLOYS music and verse separately, but that it ATTAINS ITS END by

[Q] See Note VII. chap. XIII.

[R] 'The mask had something very singular. The immense aperture of the mouth was so contrived as to augment the sound of the voice; it was in effect a real speaking trumpet, (porte voix) necessary to fill the wide extent of the place, as well as the brazen vases which were placed in the intervals of the theatre.' BRUMOY.

[s] For a curious observation of Dr. Francklin on this practice of the ancients, see note I. chap. XXVI.

[T] 'If, as Aristotle seems plainly to say, some part of the Greek tragedy was spoken like our tragic declamation, without any musical accompaniment, it was, most probably, that part of the dialogue which is in every tragedy easily distinguished from the rest, by its being carried on in a sort of quick repartee of verse to verse.' TWINING, note 46, page 245. 'Whether the monologues, or long speeches, the *μακροὶ ῥήσεις*, as Plato calls them, were performed in the same way as the rest of the dialogue, or, as has been imagined, were distinguished by being more measured, or musical, is a point not easily cleared up.' IBID. page 247.

them



them separately, in their respective parts; using the word *μετὰ τὸν*, which he has just before applied to the accomplishment of its final purpose, the refinement of the passions. Therefore, in those parts, where verse only is used, though tragedy might be compelled, from some incidental cause, to employ accompaniment, he does not consider it as essential to the performance and effect, as he does in those parts where the end of tragedy is attained by music [v].

What Metastasio says on this subject, is well worth our attention. He is very sanguine in the notion, that the whole composition of the ancient tragedy was musical, following the opinion of his countryman Castelvetro, which he quotes. His reasoning on this subject is founded on the idea, that all recitation must adopt some kind of tune different from the common cadence of speech. 'A voice,' he says, 'to be heard by a number of people to whom it is addressed, must be so excessively altered from its natural system, that it must necessarily be regulated differently, according to the different orders of its new portions, (that is, I suppose, according to the extent it is necessary, from the size of the place, or the number of the auditors, to give it,) otherwise it will form a wild, dissonant, and ridiculous scream; this new regulation must be music, and this music is so necessary to whoever speaks in public, that if it is not supplied by art, nature herself suggests it. There is no orator that does not sing; no cryer, no public vender of any merchandize, that is not constrained, for the purpose of making himself heard, either to adopt, or form, according to his own caprice, some kind of tune. Even those actors who pretend to

[v] *Διὰ μέλους.*

X

recite



‘ recite verse without music, are obliged to invent one which they call  
 ‘ declamation : music, indeed, but very imperfect, since it is only regu-  
 ‘ lated by the uncertain judgement of the reciter’s ear. This natural  
 ‘ proof, which is as clear as it is true, joined to an infinite number of  
 ‘ others which confirm it, discovers the error of those critics who have  
 ‘ positively decided, that no part of the ancient drama was sung except  
 ‘ the chorus.’ *ESTRATTO DELLA POETICA*, page 52. Now after  
 all, this only proves, or rather corroborates the truth of my conjecture,  
 that, as when the voice is carried to an extent beyond its natural pitch,  
 it will necessarily adopt some unnatural tone ; so it is highly probable that  
 recitation in the ancient theatres, whose size required an extraordinary  
 extent of voice, and its consequence, an unnatural tone, might have that  
 tone regulated by some instrumental accompaniment, which though  
 so perfectly distinct from those parts, such as the choral odes, where  
 music was employed, in the fullest sense of the word, as completely to  
 justify the opposition in which they are placed to each other by Aristotle,  
 might yet occasion those passages in the ancient writers, that are quoted  
 by Metastasio in support of his hypothesis [x].

[x] The strongest argument of Metastasio is drawn from a passage of Aristotle himself, *Problem*, Sect. xix. 49. where he describes the different kinds of music adapted to the actors, and the chorus. All the others are drawn from Roman writers, except one from Lucian de *Saturnione*, which is evidently intended to shew the absurdity of the musical accompaniment, in his time, which was, most probably, different from that of the Athenian stage in the time of Aristotle ; for while he blames this unnatural accompaniment, he expressly says, that the AN-  
 CIENT POETS regulated the other decorations of the theatre as well as the mere words, a proof that the practice was changed ; and Metastasio himself allows he is complaining of the effeminate music of the actors of his own time ; therefore it not only invalidates the evidence of the Roman writers, but tends to overturn the general system of Metastasio, as to the merit of the musical drama.

The



The real motive of Metastasio's attachment to this hypothesis, it is sufficiently obvious, arose from his partiality to the opera, in which he was a most excellent writer, and which he wishes to shew was a lineal, and legitimate offspring, of the Greek tragedy, as most probably it was. The Roman theatre having turned the necessary means of modulating the voice, in so large and open a room, into a real musical accompaniment, which the Italian theatre retained as an ornament after it ceased to be absolutely requisite.

But the size of the modern theatre [y] is by no means such as to require any unnatural elevation of the voice. And as to the necessity of every person speaking in a tone, who addresses a public assembly, it certainly is not founded on fact. A member of parliament, who was to address the house of commons, or even his constituents, in any thing like a tone, or tune, would not be heard a moment. Indeed the substitution of modulated, for impassioned accent, or, in other words, the laying any emphasis of any kind, but what the sense, or rather the expression of the sense requires, is a certain unerring proof that the speaker is delivering what he has before committed to memory. I have heard many good preachers; but I never heard one who did not, in the course of a sermon, lay the [z] emphasis often on places contrary to the sense. I have heard

[y] I mean the theatres of this country, used for the representation of the regular drama. The theatres of Italy, especially those at Naples, Turin, and Milan, may require modulated recitation to fill them with propriety.

[z] By emphasis here, I mean the distinction of words in a sentence, and not of syllables in a word, which, I think, both Dr. Beattie and Mr. Nares have erroneously confounded with accent.

For a further attempt to illustrate this subject, the reader is referred to note II. chap. xx.



as many bad speakers in parliament; but I never heard one who was speaking on the subject in debate without premeditation, that ever placed the emphasis contrary to the sense he meant to convey; and in common conversation the emphasis was never yet laid improperly. As to the tone used by the venders of merchandize, we allow a kind of song to the cryers of oysters and mackrel; but an auctioneer, who attempted to adopt one, would certainly be laughed at. And since the days of Garrick [A], all unnatural declamation has been entirely banished from our theatres.

The probability and excellence of the musical drama is also defended by Metastasio on another principle, with which, as a general rule, I perfectly agree, viz. ‘ That an imitator, who does not undertake to produce the exact truth, but only to give as great a likeness as possible to the material that he employs, has perfectly fulfilled his promise, and attained his end, when he has given it every thing of which his materials are capable—and that it is from ignorance of this nature of imitation, that arises the contemptuous judgement of those, who treat the musical drama as improbable, and absurd, because the actors die with a song in their mouth; as if from its first origin, language measured and modulated, was not the appropriated and indispensable material of every kind of poetical imitation.’ *ESTRATTO DELLA POETICA*, page 87, 88.

[A] However much the public may be obliged to Mr. Garrick for this and other improvements of dramatic representation, we must lament his alteration of Drury-lane Theatre, which, from being the best calculated of any I was ever in to convey sound, since the deepening of the front boxes, and first gallery, is so faulty in that respect, as almost to want the assistance of the ancient mask. This defect is now radically removed by the pulling down the old theatre; and I hope it will not exist in the magnificent one which is erecting on its site.

Now



Now though, as I have already said, I perfectly allow the truth of this as a general principle; yet the last part of the quotation, taken in its strictest sense, is not true; neither does it follow, because in imitations made by the fine arts the material should appear, that every material is proper for every kind of imitation, or that some materials may not be so inadequate, or so opposite to the imitation of the object intended, as to be entirely incapable of producing any interest. For though difficulty overcome may, in some cases, enhance the merit of imitation, as ‘sculpture in marble is more valuable than in wax, on account of the greater difficulty of the execution [B];’ yet no difficulty surmounted, can ever compensate for any radical inadequacy in the material to effect its proposed end. A statue of Glycon will excite the admiration of cultivated taste, even when well copied by the easiest process; but Atlas hewn into a statue, would only awake the wonder of the multitude.

Even Metastasio could see the force of this distinction when it favored an hypothesis of his own. For arguing against the ancient chorus, he blames the absurdity of a number of persons agreeing together in the same sentiments at once, and bursting forth in a general declaration of them. (Estratto, page 236.) Forgetting that this may also be solved, by saying these combined voices are only the means of imitation, and that there is no more real absurdity in a [c] speech being accompanied by vocal than by instrumental performers. And again, in his note on this line of the epistle to the Pisos,

‘Quæ canerent agerentque peruncti facibus ora.’

[B] Estratto, page 344.

[c] Many of the choral odes in the Greek tragedies are in the singular number, as spoken by one person. As in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, v. 1105, beginning

Εἷπες ἐγὼ πάντις ἐμὶ—

where



where he is defending against Sanadon the continued music of the Greek drama, he observes, that if the contrary were allowed, there would be found in the Greek tragedy, 'that disgusting medly [D] of speaking and 'finging, which is now hardly tolerated in the [E] comic opera, as being 'an extravagant deformity, invented by the mirth of scurrilous licentiousness, to excite the laugh of the vulgar.'

In regard to the first instance, Metastasio, aware that what he urges against the sudden coincidence of sentiment and expression, in the persons of the Greek chorus, might be urged with equal force against the chorus of the Italian opera, tries to qualify it by saying, it is natural for the stage to avail itself of the pleasure of a chorus, in a sacrifice, or a triumph, where the people may be supposed to sing premeditated words, or, in a popular commotion, where they may naturally agree, on a sudden, in their thoughts and expression, as in calling for justice, vengeance, pity, war, or peace. Unluckily in this case the theory and the practice of Metastasio are at variance; for there is hardly a concluding chorus among his operas, that is not, to the full, as unlike the sudden coincidence of popular opinion, as the most moral ode of Sophocles. And as to the people's finging a premeditated chorus, what becomes then of the material of imitation? [F] From that instant, musical language ceases to be

[D] See Mr. Twining's note 46, page 245, for a complete answer to the notion of this mixture being incompatible with the dignity of the Grecian tragic muse.

[E] Metastasio does not mean the Italian comic opera which is accompanied throughout and is their regular comedy, but the French opera comique, (which words he uses,) and which mode of composition, copied from the French, has driven the scenes of Shakespear from our disgraced theatre, to found their fame on the inferior, though generous efforts of a sister art.

[F] There is a curious instance of this sort in LOVE IN A VILLAGE, when Justice Woodcock sings a song, as a song to his daughter's lover. There is an absurdity the reverse of this, though of



be the language of the characters, the deception is expressly disavowed, and the performer may as well, as Bottom advises the lion, 'come forward and say, "I am no such thing, I am a man as other men are." And there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly, he is Snug the joiner.'

What was the effect of the musical accompaniment on the ancient theatre, whether continued throughout the whole piece, or only used in parts of it, we can now hardly judge, as we scarcely know what it was. On the modern stage it seems to weaken the force of the interest, as I think no artificial modulation can ever equal the impassioned notes of nature uttered by a good actor. In general, the pleasure we derive from the music, is rather our object in the Italian opera than the interest of the scene. It appears, I confess, to me, that blending music with impassioned language [G], tends strongly to weaken the energy of both, and the only way to give each their full effect is to follow the precept of Aristotle, and keep them 'distinct in their respective parts. [H].'

of exactly the same tendency, in *Tancred and Sigismunda*, where the letter from *Tancred*, which *Sigismunda* reads, is in prose. In both these cases the material of imitation is avowed. It is exactly as if the dialogue only of the *Iliad*, or the *Paradise Lost*, were in verse, and the connective parts, like the marginal directions of the drama, were in prose. If all the other characters of *Love in a Village* occasionally express their sentiments in musical airs, *Justice Woodcock* should not be an exception. If *Tancred* speaks in verse, he should not write in prose.

[G] It must be remembered I am not speaking of lyric poetry, but confine my observations entirely to dramatic effect.

[H] Aristotle, in his first chapter, make the distinguishing character between the regular drama and the *nomi* and *dithyrambic* poetry, to consist in this circumstance, of the one species using music and poetry together throughout the piece, and the other in separate places.

Those



Those writers who have particularly considered the powers of music, its merit as an imitative art, and its influence over the passions [1], have been of opinion, that its principal force does not consist so much in exciting our feelings by imitation, as in the power it possesses of causing such a temper of mind, as is fit to receive the impressions intended to be made by the poet. If this is the case, the chorus [κ] being an essential part of the ancient tragedy, could not possibly have been disposed better than it was by the custom of the Grecian theatre, where the leading character of the group, or the Coryphæus, was considered as one of the characters of the drama, and took a part in the action; while the whole body together were employed as a kind of musical ornament between the intervals of the action, keeping up, and heightening the force of the impression arising from the incidents, by moral and pathetic reflections on their consequences, delivered in beautiful verse, and accompanied by music calculated to awaken congenial sensations in the mind. M. Lessing observes, [L] (*Dramaturgie*, vol. i. page 44,) that ‘as the  
 ‘orchestre in our theatres, in some degree, holds the same place with  
 ‘the chorus of the ancients, the lovers of the drama have long wished,  
 ‘that the music which precedes the performance, and that which is  
 ‘played between the acts, should agree with the nature of the piece.’  
 And he tells us, an attempt of this sort was made by a M. Scheibe, on the tragedies of Polyucte, and Mithridate, and executed on several dif-

[1] Particularly Mr. Harris, Dr. Beattie, and Mr. Twining.

[κ] See note IV. chap. XII.

[L] Mr. Twining makes the same observation. ‘The performers,’ he says, ‘in the orchestra of a modern theatre, are little, I believe, aware that they occupy the place, and may consider themselves as the lineal descendants of the ancient chorus.’ NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION, Part II. Sect. XXI. page 103.



ferent theatres in the year 1736. The same attempt, he says, was also made by M. Agricola, at Berlin, on the tragedy of Semiramis, and with complete success.

I fear this experiment would hardly succeed on our theatre. It is, sometimes, very difficult for the lover of the drama to prevail on his neighbours, to suppress their conversation in the most interesting scenes of a tragedy; and I believe no musical power, less than that of Orpheus, could charm an English audience from the pleasure of talking between the acts. We see, every day, the same persons, who, in the country, would pay half a guinea, and travel twenty miles in the dark, to sit in raptures, real or affected, at a concert, performed by a band, in every respect inferior to those which fill our theatrical orchestres, appear perfectly inattentive to the music at the play-houses, and who would think a person out of his senses, who should request their attention to any piece of music that should be performed between the acts of a play.

Only one attempt, that I know of, (I cannot say of this kind, since its tendency was directly opposite,) has been made here, to introduce any thing, during the intervals of the representation, at all allusive to the incidents of the piece. This was in the tragedy of Zara, where, in the intervals, a humorous dialogue was to be sung by Mr. Beard and Mrs. Clive, commenting on, and ridiculing the incidents and sentiments of the preceding act. Of the success of this curious attempt, or whether the dialogue was ever performed, I am ignorant; but it is generally printed with the tragedy.



## NOTE III.

THE FABLE THEN IS THE CHIEF PART, AND, AS IT WERE,

THE SOUL OF TRAGEDY.

THIS observation of Aristotle is undoubtedly founded on nature, and is not only applicable to tragedy, but to every other kind of imitative composition, whether dramatic or narrative.

Perhaps there is no circumstance in which the tragedies of the present day are so deficient, as in the want of interesting action. This is, in a great measure, owing to the strict adherence to the French rule, of not suffering the supposed time of action to exceed the real time of representation. Dramatic poetry is, by this regulation, almost confined to the boundary of painting, and can only represent a single scene of any great event. And this is attended by another inconvenience; for the allotted space of five acts becomes as much too great for that single scene, as the confined period of three hours would be too small for the whole action; and hence the poet is obliged to spin out his tragedy by means of the dialogue, and falls under the same [M] inconvenience as would attend a proper and complete dramatic fable, without episodic parts, if swelled to the size of the epopee.

The great defect in that [N] truly sublime poem, the Paradise Lost, is a want of interest in the fable; every character, except two, being super-

[M] Poetic, Chap. xxvi.

[N] See Beattie on Poetry and Music, Part I. Chap. iv.

natural;



natural; and we can never be greatly interested in the distress, or prosperity, of a person, into whose situation it is impossible for us to [o] put ourselves.

Addison, who was determined to find every possible excellence in the *Paradise Lost*, though he could not help [p] seeing this defect in the fable, nevertheless makes the following remark. After observing that the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*, from [q] their national subjects, must have been respectively very interesting to the Greeks and Romans, he proceeds, 'Milton's poem is admirable in this respect, since it is impossible for any of its readers, whatever nation, country, or people he may belong to, not to be related to the persons who are the principal actors in it.' *Spectator*, No. 273. Now, besides the mistake Addison appears to have made as to the effect of national fable, which seems to be rather the soothing the vanity of the reader, than the encrease of his interest in the action, one should hardly have supposed, that Addison could have been ignorant of the obvious truth, that every affection is exactly weakened in proportion to its becoming general. There is no distinction so great in civil life as that between a man and any other animal, and yet I never knew a person proud of this last distinction, though there is no elevation of rank so inconsiderable, as not to have awakened pride in some bosoms.

[o] ὁ ὅλος δὲ περὶ τὸν ὁμοίον. Poet. Ch. xiii.

[p] *Spectator*, No. 357.

[q] It seems a national hero, in Addison's opinion, was a *line qua non*, in the epopee; for he says, in his critique on Chevy Chase, 'Virgil's hero was the founder of Rome,' (was he?) 'Homer's a prince of Greece, and for this reason Valerius Flaccus, and Statius, who were both Romans, might be justly derided for having chosen the expedition of the golden fleece, and the wars of Thebes, for the subjects of their epic writings. *SPECT.* No. 70.



The same thing happens to the other passions. We are strongly affected by a tale of private distress, even if not extending to danger or death; but we read, [R] without any emotion, of

- In one great day, on Hockstet's fatal plain,
- French and Bavarians, twenty thousand slain,
- Push'd through the Danube to the shores of Styx;
- Squadrons eighteen, battalions twenty-six.

PRIOR.

An error of the opposite side, but arising from the same cause, appears in the last book of the English Garden. By making an affecting tale the principal object, the subject of the poem is thrown entirely into the back ground. The mind is so much more influenced by the imitation of human actions and manners, than by any the most beautiful description of inanimate nature, that when they coincide, if the former is not very much kept down, it will entirely destroy all our interest in the latter. The story of Eurydice, in the fourth Georgic, is like the sketch of a mythological incident, such as Niobe, for instance, introduced into a landscape. But the pathetic tale of Nerina, and especially in the peculiar form in which Mr. Mason has introduced it, takes up our whole attention, and the embellishment of the English Garden becomes the mere scenery of the action. Who will regard the ornament of a temple who is looking at the slaughter of the innocents, or examine the perspective of an apartment, which contains a Beaufort expiring in the agonies of guilt and despair?

[B] This is admirably well illustrated by a story told in one of the numbers of the *Adventurer*. See also the *Encyclopedie*, Art. *Illusion*.

NOTE



## NOTE IV.

THE PROFESSED END OF TRAGEDY IS TO IMITATE AN ACTION;  
AND, CHIEFLY BY MEANS OF THAT ACTION, TO SHEW THE  
QUALITIES OF THE PERSONS ACTING.

PERHAPS there is not a stronger instance of the difference between manners introduced as secondary to the action, though arising immediately, and necessarily, from it; and their holding the first place, than the novel of Tom Jones compared with Tristram Shandy. The masterly contrivance of the fable in the former, at once astonishes and delights us; but though we may be struck with the high coloring of the other, we soon perceive it is laid on promiscuously; we are amused, but we are not interested, except in those parts where our passions are engaged by incident, as well as awakened by quality; such as the admirable story of Le Fevre.

I have often thought the [s] censure passed by Longinus on the *Odyssæy*, when compared with the *Iliad*, arose from his misapprehension of this and another passage of Aristotle; for one of the reasons he gives for introducing his unfavourable criticism on the *Odyssæy*, he himself tells us, is to shew, 'how the greatest writers and poets, when their genius  
'wants strength for the pathetic, naturally fall into description of man-

[s] See note 1. chap. xxiv.



ners [T]. Now it is true, Aristotle does characterise the Iliad as being simple and pathetic, the Odyssey as complicated and descriptive of manners. (Poetic, Chap. xxiv.) But he obviously uses pathetic, as applied to the Iliad in the same sense with his definition of tragic pathos in the eleventh chapter; 'the exhibition of deaths, tortures, and wounds;' and not of that pathos which Longinus considers as a species of the sublime. And to consider the two poems with regard to the passage before us, surely the Odyssey strictly fulfils the idea of Aristotle, in painting the manners through the fable. And though the Iliad, to use the language of the drama, may be fuller of bustle, [U] I cannot think the fable either so well constructed, or so interesting, as that of the Odyssey; and surely if there is only equal excellence in the first requisite, it can, at least, be no fault, to have superior excellence in that which is allowed to hold the second place.

## NOTE V.

THE DECORATIONS OF THE STAGE, THOUGH VERY INTERESTING, HAVE THE LEAST CONNECTION WITH THE POETIC ART. NOTWITHSTANDING the vast size, and superb decorations of the ancient theatres, which were looked upon as a national concern, and kept up at the national expence, they were neither so natural, or so interesting, as those of the moderns. They had no change of scene; for what some critics have urged from a passage in the third Georgic, and

[T] Δευτέρῃ δὲ ἔνεκα προσιγορήσθω τὰ κατὰ τὴν Οδύσσειαν, ὅπως ἢ σοὶ γνώριμον, ὥς ἡ ἀπακμὴ τῶν πάθους ἐν τοῖς μεγάλοις συγγραφεῦσι καὶ ποιηταῖς εἰς ἕθος ἐκλύεται. Sect. ix.]

[U] See note iv. chap. xxvi.



the observation of Servius on it, in support of the contrary opinion, is certainly ill founded.

[x] 'Or as the turning scene its aspect shifts.'—

The note of Servius explains how this was done, either by the turning of a machine, for a representation of which the reader is referred to Dr. Warton's *Virgil*; or by drawing up and letting down curtains. But it appears from Vitruvius, L. v. that this change of scene was according to the different kind of drama, to each of which a particular scene was appropriated, that continued through the whole performance, and was always the same in every performance of the same kind. The scenery of tragedy represented palaces, whose fronts were ornamented with columns and statues; comedy had the common houses and streets of a city; and the satyric scene was adorned by trees, cottages, rocks, and caves. As tragedy, therefore, was always confined to an area before a palace, and comedy to a street, those actions only could be represented with propriety, which might happen in the open air: this, however, was little additional restraint to tragedy, confined, as it was, by the continual presence of the chorus; and comedy often broke through it, as may be shewn from many scenes of Aristophanes. Indeed, I am inclined to think the decoration of the theatre was rather meant to imitate the scene of representation, than of action; and that the area before a palace, or public building, was considered as a proper place for the exhibition of tragedy, authorised by the magistrate, while a common street was a likely place for the assembly of the voluntary [y] performers of comedy; and

[x] 'Vel scena ut veris discedat frontibus.'—

[y] See what Aristotle says, of the origin and progress of these two species of the drama, in chapters iv and v.

the



the satyric pieces being less improved, and of inferior estimation, were considered like comedy in its origin, as performed by village strollers. (See Poetic, Chap. III.)

On any other principle than this, (the stability of the scene, during the performance, being proved by the concurring testimony of all writers on the subject;) a manifest absurdity must have attended many of the Greek tragedies, where the scene of action is apparently not laid in a town. Sophocles, who is called by Aristotle the inventor of painted scenery, affords two striking instances of this kind. One in the Ajax, where Minerva says to Ulysses,

[Z] ' Now on the camp's remotest verge I find you,

' Where Ajax' tents the Grecian navy guard.'

The other in the Philoctetes, which begins,

[A] ' And now we tread the unfrequented sands

' Of desert Lemnos' sea-encircled shore.'

It has already been observed in a [B] note on the fourth chapter, that the modern drama represented, is the most exact of any of the imitations effected by the arts; if, therefore, according to the hypothesis we have adopted, the illusion, as to objects disagreeable in themselves, was kept up too strongly, they would cease to please, and the practice of our theatre justifies the remark. The actor does not avail himself of circumstances which are made use of by the dramatic painter with success. Our stage

[Z] Καὶ νῦν ἐπὶ σκηναῖς σε ναυικάϊς ὄρω

Αἴαντος, ἔνθα τάξιν ἰσχύειν ἔχει.

[A] Αἴη μὲν ἦ δὲ τῆς περιρρύτου χθονὸς

Λήμνε βροτοῖς ἀσειπλοῦς ἔδ' οἰκούμενη.

[B] Note 1.



is never stained with blood flowing from the wounds of the dying characters; for, as a very elegant critic observes, 'We ought to exclude those means of imitation which render it too frightfully and horribly true, as when blood is concealed in a bladder under the drefs of an actor who is to appear to kill himself, and it overflows the theatre.' *ENCYCLOPEDIA, ART. ILLUSION*, by M. Marmontel.

That our theatre formerly adopted this practice, appears from a stage direction in Dryden's *King Arthur*, relating to the single combat between Arthur and Oswald. It begins, 'They fight with sponges in their hands, dipt in blood; after some equal passes and closing, they both appear wounded.'

I cannot quit this subject without paying the tribute of gratitude to the memory of Mr. Garrick, for the improvement he made in the general probability of representation, and particularly in the characteristic dresses of the British theatre. Before his time, or, rather, before his reformation of the stage, which was long subsequent to his being the chief ornament of it, all tragedies were performed in the modern dress, and even Cato used to strut over the stage in a tye wig; and, in some instances, when this infringement of the costumi was only partial, the absurdity was only rendered more glaring. While Brutus and Cassius were in full trimmed coats, and tyes, Cæsar had a robe, a bob wig, and a laurel crown; and Falstaff was as much distinguished by his dress as by his humour, from the other persons of the drama.

The reformation of this impropriety is become universal, and extends even to the provincial theatre.



## C H A P. VII.

## NOTE II.

WHAT I MEAN BY ENTIRE IS, COMPREHENDING IN ITSELF A  
BEGINNING, A MIDDLE, AND AN END.

**INNUMERABLE** are the instances of errors as to all these points, in our dramatic writers. We have beginnings that require something to precede them, endings that do not conclude the story, and middles neither connected with one or the other.

As to the beginning of a dramatic fable, it is almost impossible that it can be included within the drama itself: as an event sufficiently great and interesting [A] to form a proper dramatic fable, can hardly be supposed to begin, and be completely finished, in the largest space of time allowed for the length of a tragic action.

The greatest difficulty, therefore, that the poet labors under in this case, is to [B] open the fable to the audience by probable means; indeed

[A] See note III, chap. VI.

[B] ' I hear a sudden noise in the street, and run to see what is the matter. An insurrection has happened; a great multitude is brought together, and something very important is going forward. The scene before me is the first thing that engages my attention, and is, in itself, so interesting, that, for a moment or two, I look at it in silence and wonder. By and by, when I get time for reflection, I begin to enquire into the cause of all this tumult, and  
' what



deed I hardly know of any circumstance in which dramatic writers are so generally blameable. The [c] mode usually adopted by the ancients was very little better than the scheme of Bayes, to insinuate his plot into the boxes. The modern fashion is, either for the hero or heroine, to tell a long story to a confidential friend, which we can only be surprized was never done before, or else a company of statesmen, or officers, are discovered as astonished at some particular event, or unusual order, which they are utterly unable to account for, till one of them, better informed and more communicative than the rest, discloses the whole secret for the common edification of his friends and the audience.

The advantage tragedy is supposed to have, and, indeed, certainly had among the ancients, over comedy, in this respect, is humorously described in a fragment, either of Aristophanes or Aripheanes, preserved by Athenæus, and quoted both by Mr. Twining and Mr. Winstanley, of which the following paraphrastic translation is attempted:

[D] Happy the tragic bard, whose graver muse,  
Cautious, some tale of ancient fame pursues;

Whose

‘ what it is the people would be at; and one, who is better informed than I, explains the affair from the beginning, or, perhaps, I make this out for myself from the words and actions of the persons concerned.—This is a sort of picture of poetical arrangement both in epic and dramatic composition.’ BEATTIE ON POETRY AND MUSIC, Part I. Chap. v.

[C] See note I. chapter XII.

[D] —Μακάριον ἔστιν ἡ τραγωδία

Πόημα καλὰ πάντ᾽, εἴγε πρῶτον οἱ λόγοι

ὑπὸ τῶν θεατῶν εἰσὶν ἐγνωρισμένοι

Πρὶν καὶ τιν' εἰπεῖν, ὡς ὑπομνήσαι μόνον



Whose conduct to the listening audience known,

Demands the aid of memory alone.

Name Œdipus, no farther we enquire;

We know his crime, his offspring, and his fire.

Pronounce Alcmaeon, boys can tell the rest,

How the sad maniac pierc'd a mother's breast.

Not so, the vot'ries of the comic stage,

New names, new facts, the wond'ring ear engage.

All that precedes the opening of the scene,

The various incidents that intervene

The bard's creative fancy must supply,

And clearly picture to the public eye.—

His own the action, persons, manners, all,

From the first opening, to the curtain's fall.

In this, if Chremes, or if Pheido fail,

A hiss of scorn rewards th' imperfect tale.

Δεῖ τὸν ποιητὴν. Ὅτι δὲ πρὶν γὰρ αὐτὸν γε φῶ

Τὰ δ' ἄλλα παντ' ἴσασιν. ὁ παῖς Λαῖος,

Μήτηρ Ἰοκάστη, θυγατέρες, παῖδες, τίνες,

Τὶ πρὶν αὐτῷ οὐδὲν, τί πεποίηκεν αὐτὸν παλιν

Εἴπῃ τις Ἀλκμαίων, καὶ τὰ παῖδ' αὐτοῦ

Παντ' εὐθὺς εὐρηκεν, ὅτι μανεῖς ἀπέκλονε

Τὴν μητέρα.

Ἡμεῖς δὲ ταῦτ' ἔκ' ἔσιν, ἀλλὰ πάντ' αὐτῷ

Εὐρεῖν δὲ νόμισα καὶ αὐτὰ, τὰ δὲ δὴ κηρύττει,

Πρότερον, τὰ νῦν παρόντα, τὴν κατὰ στροφὴν

Τὴν ἐσθλὴν. ἀντὶ τούτων παραλείπει,

Χρέμης τις, ἢ φείδων τις ἐκσυρίττεται,

Πηλεῖ δὲ ταῦτ' ἔξ' ἔσιν, καὶ Τεύκρῳ ποιεῖν.

While



While unrestrained by such coercive laws,

Peleus and Teucer, win at once applause.

The English reader, if he pleases, may substitute Richard and Henry, for Peleus and Teucer; and Belcour and Surface, for Chremes and Pheido.

It must be acknowledged, there is not the same difference between tragedy and comedy on the modern stage, as few of our tragedies are now founded on known stories; and where the action and characters are the invention of the poet, they are exactly in the same predicament with comedy. Even in those that are drawn, either from our own annals, or from popular tales, it is a very inartificial conduct in the poet to trust to the previous information of the spectators for their understanding the piece, since every fable that is not perfect in itself must be faulty. Besides, it is very possible, as Aristotle observes elsewhere, (ch. ix.) that the most popular tale may not be familiar to all the audience.

A defective middle, which requires nothing else either to precede or follow it, can only be applicable to such pieces, if any such there are, where the body of the incidents are episodic, and are not either the consequences of the opening, or the causes of the catastrophe of the fable. Perhaps, however, in those plays that are spun out after the solution of the plot is complete, such solution may properly be called a middle, that requires nothing to follow it. I must own, *Cædipus*, notwithstanding the ingenious defence of [E] M. D'Aubignac, seems, to me, faulty in this respect. For if Aristotle's definition of an end, that, 'it requires 'nothing to follow it,' be understood strictly, and not with relation to

[E] See Mr. Twining's note.



the particular fable only, there can be no such thing as a complete catastrophe, since the completion [P] of one action may be a very proper and necessary beginning of another: and which is, indeed, the case of the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, and *Œdipus Coloneus* of Sophocles. But of this more presently.

I think we find this premature catastrophe in the *Merchant of Venice*. The delivery of Antonio, and the punishment of Shylock, in the fourth act, completely end the interest of the play; and the last act can be considered only as a kind of after-piece.

Of abrupt conclusions, or catastrophes that require other subsequent circumstances to render them complete, Shakespear, like most of his contemporaries, can furnish several instances. For, as Dr. Johnson remarks, in many of his plays, 'the latter part is evidently neglected. 'He remits his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them; 'and his catastrophe is improbably introduced, or imperfectly represented.' I cannot, however, agree with the doctor, in imputing the suppression of the dialogue between the usurping duke and the hermit, in *As You Like It*, to any desire of the poet, to bring his piece to a hasty conclusion. Shakespear was too good a judge of human nature, to exert 'his highest powers in exhibiting a moral lesson,' when his audience were in anxious expectation of an interesting catastrophe; and if he chose to bring this about by a circumstance so little probable as the conversion of a tyrant, we surely cannot blame him for throwing it as much as possible into the shade. I must, however, with Mr. Twining and Mr. Stevens, regret his forgetfulness of poor old Adam. I think

[P] See Note iv. Chap. xxvi.



the same thing has happened with regard to Poins, in the conclusion of the second part of Henry the Fourth. I shall not defend his moral character against the ingenious author of the Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff, but he is certainly drawn as more of a gentleman than any of the other companions of the prince, with whom he is apparently a particular favorite, as well as I think he is with the poet. In [G] The Merry Wives of Windsor, the chief objection stated by Page to Fenton, (the fine gentleman of the play, and a man of honor,) is his having kept company with the wild prince and Poins, who does not appear in the play, though the other loose companions of the prince are introduced, with ridicule and disgrace.

The Iliad may be said to fall under the error abovementioned, of being spun out after the catastrophe is completed [H]. Perhaps the Æneid, on the other hand, should have included the marriage of Æneas and Lavinia; for as it is now, it has all the appearance of being unfinished. No ending can be complete that does not entirely satisfy us as to the final situation of the principal characters, as far as it arises from, or is connected with the incidents of the action. The Odyssey would be perfect in this respect if it ended with the twenty-third book. The last book seems superfluous;

[G] I am surprized, that in the essay abovementioned, no notice is taken of this comedy. I allow the character of Falstaff is there greatly inferior to the original draught, in the two parts of Henry iv. but though it is a copy, it is still a copy done by the hand of the master himself, and from which his own opinion, as to the character he himself designed, might be best ascertained; and I think that opinion would be in favor of the hypothesis there supported. In the important business of intriguing, many a brave man has taken a drubbing in disguise. See Note I. Chap. xv.

[H] See Note iv. Chap. xxvi.

and



and has been, by many critics, supposed not genuine, but an addition by some other hand, to make the number of books equal to those of the *Iliad*.

An historical fable has, in this respect, a disadvantage, which is not incident to one entirely invented by the poet. For we are acquainted with succeeding incidents which may counteract the pleasure we receive from the winding up of the action. This is not found in the unhappy catastrophe, which is generally fatal to the principal characters; but in an action which ends happily, our pleasure must be greatly abated when we know some terrible disaster is to succeed the temporary good fortune of the persons, in whose actions we have been strongly interested. The catastrophe of the battle of Hexham has this defect; and I much doubt if an Athenian, that had just come from the representation of the *Ulysses* wounded [1], would receive the same pleasure that another person would, from the conclusion of the *Odysses*.

M. Lessing, in his *Dramaturgie*, makes a distinction between the apologue and the epic or dramatic fable, as to the conclusion. In the first, he says, the end is attained as soon as some moral is enforced, and we trouble ourselves little about the characters afterwards. He applies this to the conclusion of one of Marmontel's tales, and a comedy taken from it, where he mentions the absurdity of calling those compositions moral tales, and adds, 'unhappily I have never been able to discover their morality.' But *Les Contes Moreaux* have no such pretension. They are not meant for tales, illustrating some moral truth, but tales, descrip-

[1] A tragedy, mentioned by Aristotle, in Chap. xiv. founded, I imagine, on the story of his death from an accidental wound given him by his son Telegonus.



tive of manners; and [κ] are very improperly translated moral tales. Unluckily we have no adjective equivalent with the French word moral, unless we use [L] ethic; and I suppose the German has the same deficiency; but, surely, the mistake might have been noticed in the French translation of M. Lessing, through the medium of which alone I am acquainted with that original and penetrating critic.

What should we say of the absurdity of a poet, who, after finishing a fable completely, were to add a supplement, destroying the effect of the whole; and yet this M. Rousseau has done, in the sequel to Emilius, published among his posthumous works. As the Emilius is a kind of apologue, to inculcate a peculiar mode of education, such a conduct is like a child's taking great pains to build a house with cards, and then throwing it down again.

## NOTE II.

BEAUTY DEPENDS ON SIZE AS WELL AS SYMMETRY.

ARISTOTLE having, in his definition of tragedy, mentioned [M] the possessing a certain degree of magnitude as one of its essential requisites, now proceeds to explain what he means by magnitude. He first

[κ] See Andrews's anecdotes. I must acknowledge an error in this point, in my first edition of the Poetic, and my obligation to the Critical Review for remarking it.

[L] Those works of Mr. Pope, which, in the earlier editions, were styled ethic epistles, have had their titles since changed to moral epistles, though they certainly have more relation to manners than morals.

[M] Μεγέθος ἔχουσας.

A a

informs



informs us, that not only a just proportion of parts, but size also, sufficient to give the eye a power of readily observing that proportion, is essential to beauty: and, as an illustration of this, he mentions a very small animal, (such, I suppose, as an insect,) where the parts are too minute to be observed. After this, lest the hypothesis should be carried too far, and beauty should be supposed to encrease always according to size, he shews, that the same defect will also arise from extreme magnitude, and the proportion of the parts will equally escape our observation. He then proceeds to apply this to dramatic action, which, he says, will encrease in beauty, according to its magnitude, provided it is not so large, but that the whole may easily be comprehended by the memory; that is, I conceive, that the connexion of the beginning, the middle, and the end, with each other, may be readily perceived and retained. And, lest he should be misunderstood, and supposed to be speaking of the actual bulk of the tragedy, he says, in direct terms, that it is nothing to the purpose; for if from the practice of the theatre, the time of representation, and, consequently, the bulk of the piece, should be exactly limited, it has nothing to do with the length of the dramatic fable, whose excellence encreases in proportion to its magnitude, provided it is not too large to be perspicuous. After this explicit distinction between the time of representation, and the extent of the fable, and which seems to have been made, from a notion that they might be confounded, shall we still be told that Aristotle directs they ought to be exactly regulated by each other?

The general fondness of the Greeks for magnitude in their objects of beauty, is very striking in the examples here brought by Aristotle to illustrate his position. He can find in nature objects too small, but none too large; and he is obliged to have recourse

to



to an imaginary animal, several miles in length. As for the Greeks esteeming size, and even strength, as requisites to female beauty, the cause is not of very difficult investigation. In the ancient commonwealths, where there was no distinction between the soldier and the citizen; where civil authority could not be enjoyed without military service, nor military service performed without strength of body, the having a strong and vigorous offspring was the first, and, indeed, almost the only object in marriage; for wealth and rank were seldom attainable by matrimonial connections. Among modern nations, in general, these last are the only objects considered in marriage [N]; and even in this country, where matches of inclination are more frequent, from our great intercourse with women, and their superior information and accomplishments, we are attached by a thousand means, which were perfectly unknown to the secluded beauties of Greece.

A very elegant critic, it is true [O], says, that 'beautiful objects are small.' But though under the word beauty here, (*τὸ καλόν*) Aristotle, undoubtedly, comprehends sublimity as well as beauty, I can by no means entirely agree with the hypothesis of Mr. Burke. Surely a woman of the largest size, justly and elegantly proportioned, with softness and delicacy of countenance, mildness of manner, and eyes 'expressive,' (to use Mr. Burke's own words) 'of such gentle and amiable qualities, as correspond with the softness, smoothness, and delicacy of the outward

[N] 'Anxious to match the generous steed,

'Where strength and swiftness mark the breed,

'Regardless of his heir.'——

MARRIAGE AN ODE, ANON.

[O] Mr. Burke's Enquiry into the Origin of the Sublime and Beautiful, Part III. sect. III.



‘form,’ may be more strictly called beautiful, even in the sense of Mr. Burke, than a little piquante brunette, whose lively eyes partake something of the *δενόν*, which he considers as a cause of the sublime [P].

I do not mean that the size should be extraordinary, any thing unnatural, whether large or small; any tendency to the dwarf, or the giant, can have no pretensions to the merit [Q] of female beauty. Mr. Burke, indeed, makes the exception as to the dwarf. He says, ‘should a person be found not above two or three feet high, supposing such a person to have all the parts of his (her) body of a delicacy suitable to such a size, and otherwise endued with the common qualities of other beautiful bodies, I am pretty well convinced that a person of such a stature might be considered as beautiful, MIGHT BE THE OBJECT OF LOVE.’ It is to be remarked, that the example is a male; if it had been a female, or, being a male, if Mr. Burke had consulted the ladies, perhaps his conviction might not have been quite so strong, especially as to the last position. He adds, however; ‘the only thing which could interpose to check our pleasure is, that such creatures, however formed, are unusual, and are often considered as something monstrous.’

ESSAY ON THE SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL, Part IV. SECT. XXIV.

[P] In this case, however, it would not partake of the sublime; for though beauty may be compatible with large objects, sublimity is perfectly incompatible with small ones.

[Q] See Note v. Chap. xxvi.



## C H A P. VIII.

## NOTE I.

THE UNITY OF A FABLE DOES NOT DEPEND UPON ITS RELATING  
TO ONE PERSON ONLY.

THIS by no means implies, that there is [A] no kind of unity in a tale which relates the actions of one person only; or, that there is not more uniformity in the works of a biographer than a general historian: though a certain degree of unity of action is necessary even in history to render it perfect [B]. But that a greater degree of unity is necessary in a dramatic action, of which he is now treating, and even in the similar though more extended composition of the epopee. It therefore follows, that all works of fiction that assume an historic, rather than an epic form, are deficient in poetical arrangement. The instances he produces are lost. However, there is no deficiency of examples, both ancient and

[A] See Hume's Essay on the Association of Ideas.

[B] See Note II. Chap. XXIII. The following judicious observation of Mr. Gilpin, will elucidate the difference between the unity of poetry and history. 'It is, perhaps, one of the great errors in painting, (as, indeed, it is in all literary as well as picturesque composition,) to be more attentive to the finishing of parts, than the production of a whole. Whereas the master's great care should be, first to contrive a whole, and then to adapt the parts as artificially as he can. I speak of imaginary landscape: when he paints a real view, his management must be just the reverse. He has the parts given him; and he must form them into a whole as he can.' REMARKS ON FOREST SCENERY.

modern,



modern, such as the [c] *Cyropædia* of Xenophon, the *Achilleid* of Statius, and *Gil Blas* [d].

Metafasio is of opinion, that Aristotle has carried the unity of poetic fable too far, when he says nothing can be esteemed a part of it, which cannot be taken away without deranging the whole. But he is obviously speaking here of the simple tragic, and epic action, divested of all their episodic and ornamental parts; just like the specimen he gives of the *Iphigenia* in Tauris, and the *Odyssey*, in the seventeenth chapter. One of the incidents of the *Life of Ulysses*, which he mentions as omitted by Homer, ([E] except the reading proposed by Harles is adopted,) is introduced in detail, in the ninth book of the *Odyssey*; but it is only introduced, to use the words of Mr. Twining, ‘digressively and incidentally, it makes ‘no essential part of his general plan.’ Aristotle, in another instance, has not [F] been accurate in marking the distinction between the plain fable, and the fable adorned with episodes.

If this rule is applied to the inimitable comic epopees of Fielding, and especially to *Tom Jones*, how many of the essential parts will be found so wonderfully connected, that even circumstances, apparently the most trifling, have consequences so interwoven with the plot, and so conducive to the solution of it, that they cannot be taken away, or

[c] The principal part, even of this work, is confined to the transactions of one campaign; and it is a doubt if it is fictitious. The facts are certainly altered and embellished; but this is too often the case with the ancient historians.

[d] See Beattie on Fable and Romance.

[E] See Note [B] Chap. VIII. on the translation.

[F] See Note [I] Chap. XXVI. on the translation.

altered,



altered, without changing and injuring the whole composition. And yet there are many episodic parts, which, though highly ornamental, may be removed without at all interfering with the general effect of the action. (I [G] do not call the History of the Man of the Hill an episode; it is a separate tale.)

That in all fictitious narrative, whose aim is to affect the passions, the poetical arrangement is naturally and obviously preferable to the historical, may be fairly inferred, from the universal adoption of it by all the novel-writers, good and bad: a description of authors not very likely to be influenced in their choice by the rules of Aristotle. Indeed, the historic form, though it may succeed in humorous compositions, is almost incompatible with a pathetic tale; since to be interesting, the circumstances must be particularly related, which would either swell the work to an enormous size, or [H] break it so into parts, as must be disagreeable to every reader. For this reason the extent of the dramatic action is naturally more confined than the epic, both from the interest being stronger [I], and, consequently, its going more into detail, and the division of the fable into parts being more obvious, and on that account more disgusting to the spectator, and hence the unity of time, though not carried to the excess prescribed by the French critics, is a necessary consideration in the drama. Shakespear, it is true, reconciles us to the breach of it; but what modern poet would presume to follow his example?

[G] See Note I. Chap. xxiii.

[H] See Note II. Chap. xxiv.

[I] Note III. Chap. xxvi.



## CHAP. IX.

## NOTE I.

IF THE WORK OF HERODOTUS WERE PUT INTO VERSE, IT WOULD BE NO LESS A SPECIES OF HISTORY IN VERSE THAN IT IS IN PROSE.

I ACKNOWLEDGE myself to have been one of the many translators, justly blamed by Mr. Twining, for neglecting the force of the expression *ἱστορία τις*, a sort, or species of history, and which, in this edition, I have corrected from his observation, which I shall take the liberty of inserting. ‘ May we not infer from this expression [A], ‘ that if Aristotle had been asked whether an epic composition in prose, ‘ would be a poem or not, he would have allowed it to be *ποίημα τι*, a ‘ kind of poem, as having the essence of poetry, invention and imitation ?’ To this, however, he would probably have added, that it would only be an imperfect kind of poem, from wanting the ornament of versification, as the work of Herodotus in verse would be only a spurious kind of history from possessing it.

Metastasio has rendered this passage properly ; [B] ‘ it would still ‘ continue, though in verse, a species of history, as it was in prose.’ Yet in his observations, anxious to support the hypothesis he had

[A] See Note III. Chap. I.

[B] ‘ Rimarrebbe come era in prosa, sempre una specie d’istoria, ancora in versi.’

advanced,



advanced, that poetry was, in any sense, incompatible with prose, and yet finding it impossible to avoid seeing the contrary doctrine was in some measure supported by Aristotle's assertion that it is the construction of the fable, and not of the verse, that distinguishes the poet from the historian, he runs into an unjustifiable refinement on the words and sense of the critic, and says he only means, that a person who writes on unpoetical subjects in verse, is not a good poet: just as we call a man that is awkward, dirty, and cowardly, no soldier, though enlisted, and receiving pay, and really a soldier in the legal and political sense of the word. The fallacy of this argument must strike every one in a variety of instances; and it is, besides, in direct opposition to the doctrine of Aristotle, since, on this supposition, verse is the essential requisite of poetry, and imitation only a quality. The sum of Aristotle's reasoning on the subject, which is directly contrary to the idea of Metastasio, seems to be this; 'Whoever forms a fable, imitative of human actions, is a poet, a maker, an inventor. If his fable is ill conducted, he is a bad poet. If he writes it in prose, he errs as to the proper material, or means of imitation. But if he forms no imitative fable, he is no poet.'

## NOTE II.

POETRY IS THEREFORE MORE PHILOSOPHICAL AND INSTRUCTIVE THAN HISTORY.

LORD BACON, in his Treatise of the Advancement of Learning, has so good a comment on this passage, that I trust the reader will not be displeased with me for saving him the trouble of referring to it.



[c] ' The use of this feigned history hath been to give some shadow  
 ' of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points, wherein the nature  
 ' of things doth deny it; the world being, in proportion, inferior to  
 ' the soul; by reason whereof there is, agreeable to the spirit of man,  
 ' a more ample greatness, a more exact goodness, and a more absolute  
 ' variety, than can be found in the nature of things. Therefore, be-  
 ' cause the acts or events of true history have not that magnitude which  
 ' satisfieth the mind of man, poesy feigneth acts and events greater, and  
 ' more heroical: because true history propoundeth the successes and  
 ' issues of actions not so agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, there-  
 ' fore poesy feigns them more just in retribution, and more according to  
 ' revealed providence: because true history representeth actions and  
 ' events more ordinary, and less interchanged; therefore poesy endueth  
 ' them with more rareness, and more unexpected and alternative varia-  
 ' tions: so as it appeareth that poesy serveth and conferreth to magna-  
 ' nimity, morality, and to delectation. And, therefore, it was ever  
 ' thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise  
 ' and erect the mind, by submitting the shews of things to the desires  
 ' of the mind; whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the  
 ' nature of things.'

[c] It must be owned, that an eminent writer of the present day, professes to be of the contrary opinion. ' The Cyropædia is vague and languid, the Anabasis circumstantial and animated; such is the eternal difference between fiction and truth.' *DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE*, Chap. xxiv. Note 115. Some persons will, possibly, be inclined to doubt the infallibility as well as the eternity of this doctrine, and even the comparison that occasioned it; and may doubt whether this eternal distinction between truth and fiction would be easily discoverable in a comparison between Homer and Thucydides. We may, however, readily excuse Mr. Gibbon, for his partiality to a species of literature, in which he has shewn so much excellence.

NOTE



## NOTE III.

IN COMEDY, POETS FIRST FORM THE FABLE, AND THEN ADD  
ANY CASUAL NAMES.

WE have already been shewn, as the first distinction between history and poetry, that one describes the real actions of a particular person, the other fictitious, though probable events that are supposed to happen to an imaginary one. And such qualities are to be given to this imaginary person, as will best suit these events, and the part he takes in them; and these qualities are not only to be marked by the action and sentiments, but even the names given to the characters should be expressive of them. It seems, however, that having said this, the critic recollected, that in tragedy the practice was different: for though the incidents, the manners, and the sentiments, were to be formed on general nature, the names were to be those of real historical persons. In comedy, however, he says, names expressive of the quality of the character are used. And, indeed, by this contrivance, the inconvenience attending comedy, mentioned in the fragment, quoted in Note I. Chap. VII. is, in great measure, obviated. For if the quality of the tragic person is known as soon as his name is announced from recollection, the same thing will happen in comedy, if such characteristic appellations are given as Pamphilus, or Parmeno, Dapperwit, or Wellbred. Steele, however, in the first number of his paper, called *The Lover*, intended as a kind of sequel to the *Spectator*, makes the following observation on this practice. ‘ I shall shun also names significant of the person’s character of whom I talk; a trick used by playwrights, which I have



‘ long thought no better a device than of underwriting the name of an  
‘ animal on a post, which the painter conceived too delicately drawn to  
‘ be known by common eyes, or by his delineation of the limbs.’ It is  
remarkable, than in this identical paper, an old bachelor is called Wild-  
goose; and, in the next, the supposed author of the work, the Lover, is  
named Marmaduke Myrtle. Indeed, the mixture of characteristic names  
with common ones, though very absurd, is not unusual. In the Jealous  
Wife we meet with Mr. and Mrs. Oakly, Sir Harry Beagle, and Terence  
Ocutter: and, in its archetype Tom Jones, Allworthy stands alone among  
an host of common names. Another impropriety often attends charac-  
teristic names in modern comedy, from the husband and wife having  
the same name; in consequence of this a very quiet nobleman, in one  
of Congreve’s comedies, is called Lord Touchwood; and this improp-  
riety is still greater when the characters of the husband and wife are  
particularly contrasted as to their conduct to each other. Where is the  
propriety of Mrs. Bruin, and Mrs. Sneak, in the Mayor of Garrat? In  
Mr. Cumberland’s Observer, there is a very well conducted and interest-  
ing fable, where the principal person, from his indolence of disposition,  
is called Ned Drowsy. This gentleman, like Cymon, is entirely altered  
by falling in love, and he becomes a very spirited and active young man.  
His name, therefore, ceasing to be expressive of his character, the poet  
is obliged to change it by an application to parliament. The introducing  
a kind of pun on the characteristic name given by the author, one  
should conceive the lowest effort of dulness to excite a laugh, and yet it  
is practised by respectable writers; as for example: in the Provoked  
Husband, Manly says to Sir Francis, ‘ O thou head of the wrong-  
‘ heads.’ Of all writers, Mr. Anstey has made the most happy use of  
characteristic names in the Bath Guide. They really contribute greatly  
to



to the humour of a poem, which draws it, besides, from a thousand different sources.

On the Greek theatre, the comic scene, like the tragic, was always laid at home. Indeed, it could be laid no where else. They knew the manners of no other people. Terence adopted Athenian manners from Menander; and Moliere, in many of his pieces, from Terence. The whole interest of *L'Etourdi* turns on the purchase of a slave. Our older comedies are generally founded on foreign stories. The only comedy of Shakespear, where the scene is laid in England, (except the comic parts of his historical plays), is *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The same remark is, in general, applicable to Beaumont and Fletcher. A [D] Spanish story, with some English characters introduced, was, for a considerable time, much the fashion here, and is still a favorite subject for the musical drama. The regular comedy, at present, I believe, confines itself to domestic fable and character, if not to domestic scene; for, I believe, the comic muse has ventured to cross both the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, to visit our colonies.

[D] I would recommend to those critics who think they can explain every passage in the ancient dramatic writers, to turn their thoughts to the following speech, in one of Dryden's comedies, which, to me, has always been perfectly unintelligible. It is in the *Mock Astrologer*, where a Spanish character, refusing to enter into a scheme as inconsistent with his honor, an Englishman says to him, 'Nay, and you talk of honor; by your leave, Sir, I hate your Spanish honor ever since it spoiled our English plays WITH FACES ABOUT, AND T'OTHER SIDE.'



## NOTE IV.

IN TRAGEDY, THE NAMES OF PERSONS WHO HAVE REALLY  
EXISTED ARE RETAINED.

BESIDES the reason given by Aristotle for this, there was another very essential one on the Grecian stage. History, in the time of Sophocles and Euripides, was much confined. The Greeks considered all nations but themselves as barbarians. A king of Scythia would have been considered as an improper character for a tragic hero on their theatre; and to kings, and great public characters, the tragic muse of Greece was confined.

— ‘Reges atque tetrarchas

‘Omnia magna loquens.’ —

HOR.

We, besides the private life tragedy, and the obscure ages of antiquity, with which we may take what liberty we please, have an ample source of domestic fiction in the Saxon heptarchy, where we may form imaginary Oswalds and Edgars usurpers, or kings of Mercia and Northumberland at our pleasure; but the history of the fabulous ages of Greece was the most popular of any. It was, indeed, consecrated as the origin of the national religion; and the introduction of a new hero, or demigod, would have been esteemed a sort of profanation. Admitting the rule, that public events, are the only proper objects of tragic imitation, the reasoning of Le Pere Brumoy is perfectly just.

‘It is not probable that events of such magnitude as those of tragedy,  
‘events which can only happen in the palaces of kings, or the bosom

‘ of



‘ of empires, should be absolutely unknown. If then, the poet invents  
‘ all his subject, even as far as the names, the mind of the spectators  
‘ will revolt, all will appear incredible, and the piece will fail in its  
‘ effect for want of probability.

## NOTE V.

EVEN IF THE POEM IS FOUNDED ON REAL FACTS, THE AUTHOR  
MAY YET BE A POET; SINCE THERE IS NO REASON WHY  
MANY EVENTS THAT HAVE REALLY HAPPENED, MAY NOT BE  
CAPABLE OF THAT GENERAL PROBABILITY AND POSSIBILITY,  
FROM THE PROPER ARRANGEMENT OF WHICH HE MAY JUSTLY  
BE ESTEEMED A POET.

TO explain this clearly, it will be necessary to go a little back. We have seen Aristotle has declared general and probable fiction, and not particular fact, to be the proper subject of poetry. But he is asked, is the falsehood of the action absolutely necessary? Can no real event have interest enough to form a tragedy, when most of the subjects of the Greek tragedies are taken from history? To this the critic answers, no doubt there are many real and particular events, that have all the general probability necessary for a poetic fable. Another objection immediately occurs. If the tragic writer only clothes facts, prepared to his hands, in ornamented language, how can he be esteemed a poet, wanting the essential requisite of the poetical character, invention? To this he replies, there is no real event that has not some circumstances connected with it, discordant with the [E] general emotions it is on the

[E] See Note I. Chap. VI. See also Note II. Chap. XIV. and Note IV. Chap. XVII.



whole calculated to excite. And real situations, the most congenial with tragic effect, are often capable of being heightened by additional touches of art; and the different parts may frequently be made more closely and naturally dependent on each other than they in fact are. To supply these deficiencies, and to arrange all the incidents, so as to produce their fullest effect, is the office of the poet, and which, if well performed, fully entitles the author to that appellation [F].

The tragedy of Oroonoko is said to be formed on a real fact. Nevertheless, as Southern has encreased the interest strongly, by heightening the circumstances, inventing pathetic situations, elevating the characters, and making Imoinda an European, he certainly is justly entitled to the character of poet.

Many dramas are founded on fictitious narration, where one should imagine invention would have still less to add: but who will refuse the name of poet to the author of King Lear?

[F] 'The connexion of events often escapes our observation in nature, for want of knowing the whole combination of the circumstances; in real facts we only see an accidental concurrence of things; but the poet wishes to shew, in the texture of his work, an apparent and sensible connexion; so that if though he is really less true, he has more the appearance of truth than the historian.' DIDEROT.



## NOTE VI.

OF SIMPLE FABLES AND ACTIONS, THE EPISODIC ARE THE  
WORST.

I OWN I do not see the impropriety of this observation, or of Dacier's explanation of it, in the light Mr. Twining does. It is obvious, that the fault of lengthening the fable, or rather the bulk of the piece, by episodes, was much more likely to be incident to a simple than a complicated action, and from the simplicity of the action, more blameable as more obvious to the observation, and more likely to throw the principal action into the shade. Every difficulty would be obviated, if this paragraph were removed from the place where it now stands to the end of the next chapter. It would naturally follow the definition of the simple action, and its distinction from that which is complicated; whereas it is, in this place, little connected either with the preceding or the following paragraph: and besides, there seems an impropriety in pointing out a defect of the simple fable, before we are told what a simple fable is. But with the arrangement of the parts of this irregular work, I profess not to meddle.



## NOTE VII.

THOSE OBJECTS WILL BE PRINCIPALLY ATTAINED, IF THE  
EVENTS HAPPEN CONTRARY TO EXPECTATION, AND YET ARE  
CONSEQUENCES OF EACH OTHER.

WERE transposition my object, I should certainly detach also the paragraph, of which this is a part, to the end of the next chapter, of the concluding sentence of which it is a compleat illustration; shewing what ought to be attempted in the complicated action, as the sentence, noticed in the last observation, shews what ought to be avoided in the simple action.

But wherever it should be placed, the rule itself is strictly founded on truth and nature; and of which, more will be said when we come to analyze the catastrophe of tragedy [G].

[G] See Note VII. Chap. XIII.



## C H A P. X.

## NOTE I.

I CALL THAT A SIMPLE ACTION WHICH HAS THE TRANSITION OF FORTUNE, WITHOUT PERIPETÍA OR DISCOVERY.

ARISTOTLE here plainly distinguishes between the peripetía, (περιπέτεια), the sudden and unexpected revolution of fortune, which is peculiar to the complicated action, and the μετάβασις, or change from misery to happiness, or vice-versâ, which is not only common to every species of tragedy, but to every affecting tale, whether dramatic or narrative, serious or comic. The first of these, the peripetía, as Mr. Twining justly observes, is not to be found in Othello; nor, I think, in Lear, as written by Shakespear, whose misfortunes go on in regular succession from their first cause, his obstinacy and self-opinion. The change of fortune arises from the alteration of the conduct of his daughters; but this cannot be called sudden or unexpected, since it is foreseen by all the persons of the drama, except the old king. I believe modern dramas have oftener the simple than the complicated action, as our tragic distresses arise more from manners and passion, than incident. See Note III. Chap. XVIII.



## C H A P. XI.

## NOTE I.

## PERIPETÍA.

THE peripetía, according to the definition of Aristotle, does not only mean a sudden and violent revolution of fortune, but a revolution brought about by means, apparently likely to produce a contrary effect. Of this revolution, from happiness to misery, the *Œdipus*, produced here as an example by Aristotle, is the most perfect instance of any I know, ancient or modern; the expected means of his vindication affording the clearest proof of his guilt. As for the contrary example, though we have the out-line of the story, the tragedy being lost, we are ignorant with what art the incidents were arranged, to produce the peripetía as described by the critic.

On the modern theatre, the tragedy which ends unhappily, has seldom, if ever, a peripetía; for the tragedies of the present day begin with tears: the change of fortune which interests us in the course of the action, arises from transient gleams of hope scattered through the piece, which deepen the succeeding distress that attends their disappointment, as in *Venice Preserved*, *Douglas*, and *Tancred and Sigismunda*. In this last tragedy, Thomson, in compliance with custom introduces *Sigismunda* deeply afflicted with prophetic, or if you will, imaginary horror, though she has the certain prospect of the possession of a throne with the man she loves, at the conclusion



conclusion of the first act. Indeed, if instead of deriving the catastrophe from manners and passion, and cutting the gordian knot at last by the sword of the dying Osmond; the distress had turned entirely on the forgery of Tancred's consent to fulfil the king's will, and that circumstance had been the hinge on which the catastrophe had turned, instead of a subordinate circumstance in the second act: the tragedy of Tancred and Sigismunda would have furnished a complete instance of this species of peripetia.

Another reason for the want of peripetia in our tragedies that end with distress, is assigned in the last note. Probability is not violated by the most extraordinary revolution of events, but a sudden change of passions and manners is utterly improbable.

Of the unexpected reverse of fortune, from evil to good, we have innumerable instances: the most striking I recollect, is in the fourth act of the Merchant of Venice. The deliverance of Antonio arises from Portia, just in the moment he is expected to suffer from her confirmation of the claim of Shylock.

## NOTE II.

THE DISCOVERY, AS THE NAME IMPLIES, IS A TRANSITION  
FROM IGNORANCE TO KNOWLEDGE.

THIS species of dramatic incident, [A] which, like the foregoing, and for the same reason, is, among us, confined to tragedy with a happy

[A] For further observations on the discovery, see note IV, chap. XIV. and notes on chap. XVI. *passim*.



catastrophe and comedy, was a great favorite with our earlier writers, but is seldom used by modern poets; probably from the difficulty of continuing the disguise with probability as to the other persons of the drama; or in regard to the audience, without keeping a principal character, (for of such only can an interesting discovery consist,) too long in obscurity, and sacrificing too much to a single surprising situation, which will lose much of its effect after the first representation.

Can any thing be more absolutely improbable than that a daughter should be disguised from her father, and a woman from her lover, by being in men's cloaths? [B] and yet this is the case of Rosalind in *As You Like It*, where, from Orlando's fictitious courtship of Rosalind, though in disguise, and from the likeness being observed, both by him [C] and the duke, the improbability is still rendered more striking.

As to the disguising the principal character from the audience, it appears a useless refinement, and was seldom practised by the ancients. In Shakespear also, Rosalind, Imogen, Viola, Julia, the Duke in

[B] There must have been a peculiar improbability attending this kind of disguise, on which so many of the plays of Shakespear, and Beaumont and Fletcher turn, from all the female characters being performed by men, an offence against probability when in a female habit; but for a man, in his own cloaths, to act a beautiful princefs (Imogen, for instance) is perfectly inconsistent with the least shadow of it. See note IV. chap. XIII.

[C] DUKE SEN. ' I do remember in this shepherd boy  
' Some lively touches of my daughter's favour.

ORLA. ' My lord, the first time that I ever saw him,  
' Methought he was a brother to your daughter.  
' But, my good lord, this boy is forest born.'



Measure for Measure, are all known to the spectators. Maffei and Voltaire have chosen to conceal Eghistus from the theatre, as well as from his mother, in Merope; but in this they have not only deviated from the tragedy of Euripides [D] but destroyed the striking effect described by Plutarch, which was plainly derived from their relation to each other being known to the spectators.

One of the best instances I know, of a principal character being concealed to the audience through the whole of the action, and yet taking his proper share in it, is in the Bondman of Massinger. There is a very good instance of it also in the comedy of Seduction, by Mr. Holcroft.

## NOTE III.

THE DISCOVERY IS MOST BEAUTIFUL WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY  
THE PERIPETÍA.

DACIER has laid it down as a rule, that a discovery cannot be made the principal subject of a drama; which is strongly combated by Metastasio. Of this fanciful opinion of Dacier, which he derives from a passage in the preceding chapter, that very passage compared with this, is, in my idea, the clearest confutation; at least, as far as the sentence of Aristotle is decisive. He there says, ‘the transition of fortune;’ (*ἡ μετέλευσις*) that is, the change from happiness to misery, or the contrary, which must be the principal object, or the catastrophe of the fable, ‘in complicated actions, is effected by the means of peripetía, or disco-

[D] See note iv. chap. xiv.



‘very, or both;’ and he here says, that is preferable which is effected by the union of both; where the catastrophe arises from the peripetia, caused by a discovery.

In the Merope of Maffei and Voltaire, the discovery is not accompanied by the peripetia. On the contrary, the distress is considerably increased by it: I doubt much if such was the arrangement of the Cephontes of Euripides.

## NOTE IV.

THE PATHOS, IS THAT PART OF THE ACTION WHICH IS EITHER FATAL OR PAINFUL; SUCH AS DEATHS EXHIBITED ON THE STAGE, OR TORTURES, OR WOUNDS, OR OTHER THINGS OF THAT NATURE.

FROM this definition of the pathos, it is manifest that the rule, so much insisted on by the French critics, never to stain the theatre with blood, (*de ne pas ensanglanter le theatre*), is neither derived from the school of Aristotle, nor the practice of the Greek tragedians. It seems to have arisen from a precept of Horace, as I think, ill understood,

[E] ‘*Nec pueros coram populo Medea trucidet.*’

It is to the improbability, not the cruelty, that Horace objects.

[F] ‘*INCREDULUS odi.*’

[E] ‘Nor let Medea, in the people’s sight,

‘Her infants murder.’—

[F] Almost every translator gives this as the sense, ‘It is both incredible and disgusting,’ but the literal meaning is, ‘It disgusts because it is incredible.’ Not,

‘I hate to see, and never can believe.’

ROSCOM.

But,

‘Not believing, I detest to see.’

I do



I do not conceive 'coram populo' to allude to the spectators, but the chorus. This will be illustrated by comparing the management of Euripides with that of Seneca in this identical instance. In Euripides, Medea kills her children behind the scenes, and the chief person of the chorus naturally exclaims,

[G] 'The house I'll enter, and attempt to save  
'The children from destruction.'—

In [H] Seneca, Medea kills one of her children in the presence of the chorus, without their making any observations on it; and on the entry of Jason she snatches the other up into her chariot, and deliberately [I] murders

[G] Παρέλθω δόμους, ἀρῆξαι φόνον  
Δοκεῖ μοι τέχνους. —

[H] As Seneca was subsequent to Horace, it could not be his play that Horace means to censure: but, probably, Seneca borrowed his arrangement of the catastrophe from some other Greek tragedy, or from the Medea of Ennius.

[I] Perhaps from the perpetration of this shocking crime, the strongest possible proof may be drawn of the force of custom over the most powerful feelings of nature. The destruction of children, by their parents was so common at Athens, that, if we may judge of Menander, by Terence, even on the comic stage, the question, whether a child shall be reared or exposed, was treated as a common domestic consideration.

An author, well acquainted with human life, though not inclinable to see it on the fairest side, has some just observations on the commission of this crime in modern times, which he imputes to the fear of shame and disgrace, and their inevitable attendant, ruin and want, overcoming natural affection. (Fable of the Bees, Remark C.) How far, in a state of civil society, it is justifiable to place a person in the cruel alternative, of choosing either a shameful death or a life of infamy, I shall not attempt to determine. But of this cruel alternative, the makers of law can have no idea. The father and mother, whose happiness depends on a favourite child, and who watch over its safety with an anxiety hardly to be conceived, cannot enter into the sensations of a wretch, who knows her new-born infant is her greatest enemy, the destroyer



murders it in the face of the chorus and all the surviving persons of the drama. Of such an arrangement, the critic may well say,

*Quodcunque ostendis mihi sic incredulus odi.*

The Bishop of Worcester, in his note on this verse, is of the same opinion as to the impropriety with which Seneca has conducted his play, and quotes a passage from Quintilian, to shew that the Medea of Ovid 'had some of the vices here charged on Seneca.' 'The Medea of Ovid,' he says, 'seems to me, to shew how much that writer could have excelled, if he had chosen rather to moderate his genius than indulge it [κ]. It must be observed, that though Quintilian MAY mean to speak of the inequality of this tragedy, it appears more likely, that he compares this tragedy with his other works. For if he only speaks of the fertility of his genius, and his intemperance in the general indulgence of it, while particular parts shew his power of regulating it, it is equally applicable to all his works. Apply the passage to Dryden, and let the exception be his ode on Cecilia's day, and observe if there would be any impropriety in using the exact words of Quintilian.

of all her hopes, the author of her utter ruin. The same woman who, in this situation, may have acted the part of Medea, might be capable, in a happier situation, to have sacrificed her life to save her infant. Justice, perhaps, however, must punish deliberate acts of this kind when, like other crimes, clearly proved; but to make a desire to escape shame, a proof of murder, is a law that would have disgraced the code of Draco. See 21 Jac. I. ch. 27. which makes the concealment of the child's death almost conclusive evidence of its being murdered by the mother.

[κ] 'Ovidii Medea, videtur mihi ostendere, quantum vir ille præstare potuit, si ingenio suo temperare quam indulgere, maluisset.'

It



It is curious to observe, as a proof of candid criticism, how an ingenious man will contrive to bend an ancient writer to support his own hypothesis. Bossu, in his *Essay on the Epopee*, L. III. page 258. says, 'Horace orders, even in tragedy, that incidents, too marvellous, such as the change of Progne into a bird, or Cadmus into a serpent, should be kept from the view of the spectators.' Not mentioning a word of Medea, and even omitting the line in question, in a quotation of the passage at the bottom of the page. But in the same book of his work, page 282, he says, 'certain actions are unfit for representation, either from being too horrible, as a mother who kills her own children, or the change of a human creature into a bird or a serpent.' And here he quotes the passage of Horace entire.

How little the Grecian stage was accustomed to this delicacy of the French, a perusal of its tragedies will sufficiently shew [L]. The exhibition of a dead body appears to have been a favorite spectacle with the Athenians.

The death of Ajax has always been considered as an instance of a character killing himself on the stage. But this has been lately combated by the Abbé Barthelemi in his *Travels of the younger Anacharsis* [M].

'Several modern critics,' he says, 'have imagined, that in the tragedy of Sophocles, Ajax kills himself with his sword, in the presence of the spectators. They bring the authority of the scholiast, who observes,

[L] And these are now open to the English reader, through the elegant and liberal, yet accurate translations, of Mr. Potter and Mr. Francklin.

[M] See his note, chap. LXXI, 'sur le lieu de la scene ou Ajax se tuoit.'



‘that the characters seldom kill themselves on the stage [N]. I think  
 ‘that the rule has not been violated in the present instance. To satisfy  
 ‘us of this, it is only necessary to follow the thread of the action.

‘The chorus being informed that Ajax was not in his tent [O] go out  
 ‘on both sides of the theatre to seek him, and bring him back [P]. The  
 ‘hero appears again on the stage, and, after an affecting soliloquy, he  
 ‘throws himself on the point of a sword, whose hilt he had previously  
 ‘fixed in the ground [Q]. The chorus return [R], and while they are  
 ‘complaining of the ill success of their search, they hear the cries of  
 ‘Tecmessa, who had found the body of her husband [S], and they ad-  
 ‘vance to see the dreadful spectacle [T]. It is not therefore on the  
 ‘stage that Ajax kills himself.’

I do not know if I am influenced by a partiality to my own opinion,  
 but I think the circumstances mentioned by M. Barthelemi, as the sup-  
 port of his hypothesis, are a confirmation of mine. And that Sophocles,  
 meaning to exhibit the death of Ajax on the stage, was obliged to violate  
 a fundamental rule of the Grecian drama, and send off the chorus merely  
 to avoid the improbability of such an act being performed, ‘coram po-  
 ‘pulo;’ before the people of Salamis, who formed the chorus.

To obviate, however, the charge of prejudice, either in favor of my  
 own opinion or the custom of the British theatre, whose blood and blank

[N] ‘Schol. Sophoc. in Ajac. v. 826.’

[O] ‘Ajac. Soph. v. 805.’

[P] ‘Ibid. v. 824.’

[Q] ‘Ibid. v. 826.’

[R] ‘Ibid. v. 877.’

[S] ‘Ibid. v. 900.’

[T] ‘Ibid. v. 924, 1022.’



verse has been proverbially censured by some delicate critics, I shall appeal to the judgement of a writer who must be impartial, Metastasio; a poet in a species of the drama, whose delicacy is even more fastidious in this than the French, and which does not allow the unhappy catastrophe. Though he does not himself approve the introduction of such spectacles, he cannot shut his eyes to their appearance on the Greek theatre. Among many other examples of their not adhering to the imaginary rule, '*di non insanguinar la scena*,' he cites the incident before us. 'Is not the stage stained with blood, when Ajax throws himself on a drawn sword, with the hilt fixed in the ground for that purpose?' Let the critics torment themselves as much as they please, to prove that Ajax does not kill himself in the sight of the audience, they can never absolutely deny that long scenes pass, after the blow, round his body, transfix'd and visible, since his wife Tecmessa, his brother Teucer, and all the chorus, lament over it, cover it, uncover it, and lift it from the ground, to which it had, in a manner, been nailed, and from which place it could not have before been moved, and the visible place of representation always continues the same.'

If Ajax does not kill himself on the stage, he must be supposed to speak his dying soliloquy behind the scene. But a consideration of the form of the ancient theatre will, I think, reconcile every apparent contradiction.

We are told by Julius Pollux, that the entrance of the principal character was always from the front of the stage, which, in tragedy, [u] was the portico of a palace, while the inferior characters entered or went

[u] See note v, chap. vi.



out on the sides, not, I presume, at right angles with the front scene as on the modern theatre, but diagonally. For in comedy, where the scene represented streets, characters frequently are produced as seen by the spectators, though not by each other [x]. A thing often attempted on the modern stage, but always, from the shape of our theatre, attended with some degree of improbability.

Now Ajax had fixed his sword, we will suppose, under the portico, nearly at the bottom of the stage; and, after his last speech, threw himself on it in full view of the audience; the chorus returning from each side could not see either the body, or Tecmessa, who, entering from the front, must necessarily find the body, round which, all the circumstances mentioned by Metastasio take place in view of the audience; or, otherwise, all must pass behind the scene, that is said by Teucer, Tecmessa, and the chorus, from the falling on the sword, ver. 876, till the entrance of Menelaus, v. 1066, who forbids their moving the body, just, it seems, as they are going to take it up; and, particularly, orders them to let it remain as it is [y].

Whether this practice of killing on the stage, which was carried to such excess by our old writers, but which is now used with greater moderation, is really a beauty or a fault, is another question. The sud-

[x] Mr. Saunders, in his Treatise on Theatres, page 70, speaking of the theatre at Imola, proposes a plan for obviating this disadvantage on the modern stage. It would be injustice to mention this work without acknowledging the information, as well as amusement, I have received from the perusal of it.

[y] Οὗτος σὲ φωνῶ τόνδε τὸν νεκρὸν χερσὶν  
Μὴ συνκομιζεῖν, ἀλλ' ΕΑΝ ΟΠΩΣ ΕΧΕΙ.

den,



den, and sometimes, unexpected blow, as when Othello kills himself, or as when Euphrasia stabs Dionysius in the Grecian Daughter, has, certainly, a very fine theatrical effect; and the dying agonies of a Siddons, or a Garrick, were truly affecting. But a stage, heaped with dead bodies, panting from the exertion of the preceding scene, is likely to excite other emotions than those of pity and terror. I should imagine the general stabbing scene, in [z] Titus Andronicus, if represented, would hardly be less risible than the catastrophe of Tom Thumb.

[z] It has often been a subject of wonder, how this monstrous farce has held its place in all the editions of Shakespear. I cannot think he wrote a line in it, though if, as Theobald suggests, it appeared before Shakespear wrote for the stage, two verses in it pleased him so well, that he has twice closely imitated them.

‘ She is a woman, therefore may be woo’d;

‘ She is a woman, therefore may be won.’

T. ANDRON.

‘ She’s beautiful, and therefore to be woo’d;

‘ She is a woman, therefore to be won.’

1st Part HEN. VI.

‘ Was ever woman in this humour woo’d?

‘ Was ever woman in this humour won?’

RICHARD III.



## C H A P. XII.

## NOTE I.

## THE PROLOGUE.

THE prologue of the ancient tragedy was a very different thing from that which goes under its name on the modern stage. It was, in fact, the opening of the piece. We have already mentioned how awkwardly this is often managed with us, and how inartificially by the Greeks [A]. Generally one of the characters, sometimes a god, and sometimes a ghost, as that of Polydore in *Hecuba* [B] relates to the audience (not to the fictitious dramatic audience, for the first entry of the chorus was usually with the parade, [C] but directly to the spectators) all the preceding circumstances necessary to let them into the story of the drama.

[A] Note 1, chapter VII.

[B] This practice of the Greek tragedies is ridiculed with some humour, in a parody by Lloyd, on the opening of the *Electra*.

‘ I a gentleman did wed,  
 ‘ The lady I would never bed,  
 ‘ Great Agamemnon’s royal daughter,  
 ‘ Who coming hither to draw water.’

[C] Mr. Warton forgot this circumstance, when he blamed Milton for opening *Comus* by a soliloquy spoken in a forest. See Mr. Twining’s note on the word parade.

Difficult



Difficult as the task is to open a drama well, like other difficulties the greater glory attends its being overcome, as it has often been by our good dramatic writers. Milton has opened both his dramatic poems in the ancient manner, and among the subjects suited to the drama of which he has left short sketches, he proposes that the tragedy of Macbeth should be opened by Duncan's ghost. Milton did not prefer this mode from any deficiency, or, at least, any distrust in his powers, but from his strong partiality to the ancients. How he would have succeeded, had he chosen the more natural, though difficult mode of the moderns it is impossible to say; we can only observe, that the same person has never yet excelled in the drama and the epopee, congenial as they appear to be [D]. It is certainly lucky for his poetical character that he did not enter the lists with Shakespear in Macbeth, according to the method he has proposed. That Milton, great as his poetical merit is, could have ever succeeded in competition with that prodigy of human genius in any thing except learning and correctness I can hardly believe; but I am sure the classic ghost of Duncan would have 'started, like a guilty thing,' amid the gothic machinery of Shakespear.

It is something curious to trace the progression of the fame attending this father of our drama. In his own time he appears to have been a universal favorite. Indeed he could not have been otherwise. His faults were all committed to comply with the taste of the age when he wrote, and his beauties are such as must delight every age, and every taste for whom the beauties of truth and nature, unadorned by meretricious ornament, have charms. Both his merits and his defects therefore were popular, though probably the last most. He did not however escape

[D] See the concluding note of this work.



the envy of his rivals. Beaumont and Fletcher, whose excellencies are so far inferior, and whose farcical irregularities are so much more glaring, (for there is no incident in Shakespear so absurd as the arming [E] Demetrius Poliorcetes with a pistol,) and whose indecencies are so disgusting, have more than once levelled a satiric blow at his fame. And Jonson, the pedantic Jonson, has sometimes censured him obliquely, and sometimes praised him superciliously, not as a writer by any means equal to himself, or likely to become his rival in dramatic fame; but in the way a Cramer, or a Haydn, might be supposed to speak of a wonderful musical rustic, who, without musical education, was able to bring some wild sounds out of a violin.

Something in the same manner he is spoken of by Milton. But there is a heavier charge against HIM in regard to Shakespear. In his *Eiconoclastes* there is a passage

— ‘That sullies even his brightest lays,  
‘And blasts the vernal bloom of half his bays.’

Like all other censure of the same kind it misses the intended mark, and recoils on the author; and we are not inclined to think the worse of the unfortunate and misguided Charles because, we are told that Mr. William Shakespear was the closet companion of his solitudes.

As the age improved in false refinement, and the opinion of the French critics prevailed, Shakespear became more out of fashion with those who affected polite literature, and to be admirers of the ancients, till Rhymer, and the superficial and pedantic Shaftsbury, at last boldly stepped forth and

[E] In the humorous Lieutenant. See note 1, chap. xxiv.



condemned him and his works to oblivion. Still, however, this doctrine was too refined for the people, it was caviar to the million, and Shakespear was yet popular. The theatre, to please both the learned and the unlearned, got the plays of Shakespear cut down as much as possible to the Grecian, or rather the modern fashion, and the stage was glutted with alterations of the plays of Shakespear. At length English criticism grew too strong for French support, and ventured to walk alone. From that moment Shakespear has boasted an encreasing fame; and at this time, when the classics are more universally studied and really understood here, than in any other age or nation, when they are criticised without prejudice, and admired without pedantry, his works are as much idolized by his countrymen, as the poems of Homer were in the time of Aristotle.

At present, however, the dramas of Shakespear are more known in the closet than on the theatre. [F] Our dramatic taste seems to have

[F] Perhaps this may be accounted for, in great measure, from our want of capital actors, I mean in tragedy; we have many excellent comedians. The power of representing the characters of Shakespear fell with Garrick. From the same source we may derive the prevalence of the musical drama; we have singers though we have not actors. But that we are not insensible to the excellence of acting when we meet with it, is obvious from the reception of Mrs. Siddons. Strong as the taste for the musical drama is at present, no singer that ever yet came from Italy could support herself on the stage, through successive seasons, as that unrivalled tragic actress has done, even with better assistance than those who have acted with her. She alone acted, for several winters, against the opera, and what is still more, against the fashionable hours of the metropolis, and always to crowded houses. The degree in which she singly interested the public in the tragic scene, is a circumstance creditable to the English taste. But the dramas of Shakespear cannot be supported by an actress however excellent. Women's characters written for boys to act, can never afford sufficient exercise for the soul-subduing powers of Mrs. Siddons.



funk with Garrick. The musical drama has usurped the province both of Thalia and Melpomene; and we have lately seen one of his most entertaining plays exhibited on the stage as an opera.

What would the haughty Jonson have thought of the prophet who had told him that in an age of learning, the works of Shakespear would be in universal estimation, while his own were hardly talked of, and never read. I cannot think even that Milton could easily have imagined that among a people well versed in polite and classic literature, the [G] stuff of Mr. William Shakespear would be preferred to Comus and the Sampson Agonistes.

The genius of Garrick seems to have been particularly calculated to introduce Shakespear on the stage. He knew how to alter him so as to fit him for the audience of the present day without divesting him of any of his excellencies, and the few additions he has ventured are in the spirit of the original. These plays so altered are likely to keep possession of the theatre, while every other attempt at change and improvement are forgotten, except Cibber's Richard III. and Tate's Lear, which, with some correction of Mr. Garrick, are still acted, though the alteration of the last is directly in opposition to the precepts of the Stagirite and Mr. Addison [H].

Cibber, though versed in the province of the drama, (which is, perhaps essential to make a good dramatic writer, since the knowledge of stage effect is of great consequence,) possessed a genius not above

[G] 'Other stuff of this sort may be read throughout the tragedy.' (Richard the Third.)

EICONOCLASTES.

[H] See note VII, chap. XIII.

medi-



mediocrity; and Tate was a very indifferent poet. Yet there is a line in Cibber's *Richard*, written by himself so characteristic of the manner of his archetype that I have often heard it cited as one of Shakespear's beauties. I mean the exclamation of Richard on Buckingham's being taken,

‘ Off with his head ! So much for Buckingham.’

And I heard Lord Chatham (then Mr. Pitt) quote the following verse of Tate in the House of Commons ; undoubtedly taking it for Shakespear's,

‘ Where the god's battle bleeds in every vein.’

To return from this long digression to the immediate object of the note. The modern prologue seems to derive its origin immediately from the Roman Comedy. The prologues of Terence are very much like those of the present day, alluding to such temporary subjects as relate to the drama, and containing a kind of apology for the new piece. We are not certain whether this practice of the Romans was copied from the comic theatre of Athens, as we have only fragments of their middle and new comedy, but from the known resemblance of Terence to Menander we have reason to suppose it was.

## NOTE II.

### THE EPISODE, OR ACT.

THIS part of the drama comprehends every thing contained between the odes of the chorus. That is in fact all the piece except the prologue, which precedes the first ode ; and the exode, which succeeds the last. The intervals of the representation, and consequently the  
number



number of acts, depend on the number of these odes, which is different in different tragedies, and varies from three to seven. It is impossible to read a Greek tragedy, without seeing the absurdity of those critics who have tried to reduce all those dramas to five acts in obedience to the EX POST FACTO law of Horace.

‘ Neve minor, neu fit quinto productior actu

‘ Fabula.’——

‘ Let not your play have fewer acts than five,

‘ Nor more.’——

COLMAN.

Metaftasio observes on this subject that ‘ in Horace’s time the  
‘ Romans were accustomed to five acts, and to four rests or intervals.  
‘ And Horace very reasonably supposed that a poet would hazard the  
‘ success of his drama, however perfect, if he tried to bring the audience  
‘ to a custom different from that which prevailed in the public theatres  
‘ at the time when he wrote. If Horace had written his Art of Poetry  
‘ forty years before, he would probably have recommended the divi-  
‘ sion of the drama into three acts, for the same reason that forty years  
‘ after he advised it to be made in five. For in an epistle of Cicero  
‘ to his brother Quintus it appears evident that the public dramas were  
‘ then commonly divided into three, and not five acts. [1] “ Before  
“ I con-

[1] ‘ Illud te ad extremum et oro et hortor ut tanquam poetæ boni et actores industrii  
‘ solent, sic tu in extremâ parte et conclusione muneris ac negotii tui, diligentissimus sis; ut  
‘ hic tertius annus imperii tui, tanquam tertius actus, perfectissimus & ornatissimus videatur.’  
CIC. EP. AD QUINT. FRUT. L. I. EP. I. IN FINE.

Perhaps, however it may not be difficult to reconcile this passage of Tully with the rule of Horace if we look to the Latin tragedies. Those of Seneca have each four choral odes, dividing the piece into five acts. And yet, according to the position of Aristotle, as those  
only



"I conclude, I beg and exhort you, that after the example of good poets, and industrious actors, you would be particularly diligent in the latter part and conclusion of your office and employment, that this third year of your command, like the third act of a drama, may appear most perfect and splendid." ESTRATTO DELLA POETICA, page 245.

The same would be the reason why an English, and an Italian critic would give different advice on this head. And the propriety of such a distinction has been justified by experience in both instances. Metastasio tells us, an attempt was made to introduce the five act drama on the Italian stage, which was obliged to be dropped from the cold reception it met with on account of its novelty; and some years ago a trial was made of the drama of three acts on our stage with no better success. *Hecuba* and the *Desart Island* barely stood their nine nights. The *Way to Keep Him* still remains, (and very deservedly,) a popular comedy, but with the addition of two acts.

That this proceeds from a dislike to innovation, and not from any intrinsic merit in the rule of Horace, appears from our having no objection to it in the comic opera, where it is authorised by custom.

I must confess the space of three acts seems quite sufficient for the single circumstance of an action which is the proper object of dramatic

only are esteemed acts, or episodes, that are included between the songs of the chorus, the second, third, and fourth, could only have properly that appellation, the first being the prologue, and the last the exode. Horace, therefore, speaks according to the mode of the Roman theatre, while Tully adopts the division of the Greeks.

imitation.



imitation. The obligation laid on the poet to protract his piece to five acts occasioned our earlier poets to have recourse to the double plot; and the modern tragedy which confines itself to one action, from its length partakes something of the [κ] watery quality which Aristotle tells us would attend a simple dramatic fable, if drawn to the length of the epopee.

Besides, the division of the fable into three parts, a middle, a beginning, and an end, which Aristotle [L] has defined to be necessary to constitute an entire action, naturally suggests such a division of the drama which is to imitate an entire action. To use the words of an ingenious writer, 'The first act, or beginning will fix the spectator's attention by opening the plot, and raising his attention. The second, or middle will further continue his perplexity till he is utterly at a loss to conceive how the piece will terminate. And the third, or end will relieve him from his embarrassment and agreeable anxiety after it is carried to the utmost, by an unexpected, yet natural catastrophe [M].'

We are not only indebted to the Latin critics for the division of the drama into acts, but for the subdivision of those acts into scenes. As the act was determined by the ode of the chorus in tragedy, and the vacancy of the stage in comedy [N], so the end of the scene was marked

by

[κ] ὕδαρ. Poetic, Chap. xxvi.

[L] Poetic, Chap. vii.

[M] Letters of Literature, Letter xxi.

[N] The division of scenes in Shakespear is marked by their actual change. When the pedantry of the self-named scholars of Aristotle first took possession of our stage, one of the rules



by the entrance, or exit of a character; and this they expressed by naming all the characters at the beginning of the first scene of the first act who were then on the stage; and when a person either entered or went out repeating the names with the addition or omission of that person [o].

All this the modern theatre obviates, by simply marking the entrance and departure of the characters. Till very lately, new plays were always on their first publication printed in the Latin mode. At length however good sense prevailed over pedantry, and we have restored that form of stage direction which is most convenient, reviving the custom of our older writers, except as to the language, most of their directions being in Latin, as *Exit cum suis*, *Exeunt omnes*, *Manet*. We only retain *Exit*, and *Exeunt*.

rules was, never to change the scene, or leave the stage vacant, in the middle of an act. This Metastasio breaks through, (see his *Operas passim*.) It never prevailed on our theatre. I own I am utterly unable to see what possible advantage can be derived from the observance, or disadvantage from the breach of it.

[o] For instance: they would have written the first scene of the fifth act of *Henry iv.* Part I. thus:

ACT V. SCENE I.

King Henry, Prince of Wales, Lord John of Lancaster, Earl of Westmorland, Sir Walter Blunt, Sir John Falstaff.

SCENE II.

King Henry, Prince of Wales, Lord John of Lancaster, Earl of Westmorland, Sir Walter Blunt, Sir John Falstaff, Worcester, Vernon.

SCENE III.

King Henry, &c, reciting all the names again, except Worcester and Vernon.



The Abbé D'Aubignac was for following the example of the ancients, and laying aside all stage directions whatever, merely because they never used them. From the same principle, why not propose the disuse of capital letters, stops, and division of words, in writing and printing?

It is not very foreign to this subject to remark what was called 'the dumb show,' in our old plays. This appears to have been a kind of pantomimical exhibition of the principal circumstances of the piece previous to its commencement. There is a remarkable one in Hamlet. Before the opening of the supposed play to be exhibited to the king and queen, the following stage direction appears. 'Trumpets sound, dumb show follows,' which is accurately described, and appears to contain every circumstance of the murder of Hamlet's father. Now there is no apparent reason why the usurper should not be as much affected by this mute representation of his crime, as he is afterwards when the same action is accompanied by words.

I once conceived this might have been a kind of direction to the players which was from mistake inserted in the editions; but the subsequent conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia, entirely destroys such a notion.

This observation leads me to another. The use of soliloquies; either when the character is quite alone, or when he speaks to himself in company, which last is generally distinguished by the word 'aside,' in the margin. Though in real life this custom of thinking aloud hardly ever happens, yet we are so accustomed to it on the stage, and it is often so useful in developing a character that I think it may fairly be permitted. But no incident, even the most trifling, should ever arise from



from overhearing a soliloquy. The conversation of Mungo to this hamper in the Padlock, which is overheard by Don Diego, does not fall under this fault, as such a real conversation is perfectly consistent with the character of the grumbling negro.

To return to the word episode. It seems inconsistent, to a reader unacquainted with the origin of the Greek tragedy, that the principal part of it comprehending the body of the fable should be distinguished by a name which usually implies a digression, or some tale that is not immediately connected with the leading epic, or dramatic action, and in which sense it is frequently employed in the treatise before us. To explain this, it will be necessary to take a short view of the rise and progress of the ancient drama.

Tragedy owed its birth to a kind of ode in honor of Bacchus which was performed at the festival of that deity by rival poets, and the prize given to the successful candidate was a goat, from whence it received its name [P]. It occurred first to Thespis, one of these contending bards, to enliven the dulness of his periodic song by some tale or fable to be recited between the intervals by one of the persons employed to sing in the ode. To this person Æschylus added a second actor, as Sophocles afterwards did a third, forming a dramatic dialogue in which the ori-

[P] *Τραγῳδία*, literally means the song of the goat.

So Horace,

‘Carminē qui tragico vilem certavit ob hircum.’ ART. POET. 220.

‘He who the prize, a filthy goat, to gain,

‘At first contended in the tragic strain.’ COLMAN.



ginal reciter of the fable, taken from the musical performers of the ode, had only a subordinate part. For a considerable time however, the musical part continued to be considered as the chief; and the dramatic part as a kind of deviation from the regular form of tragedy [Q], which was sanctioned by religion, and supported and regulated by the magistrates, and from that circumstance received the appellation of episode, which it ever afterwards retained. From this it is obvious, that the chorus was not the choice of the poet, but a necessary appendage to the theatre which neither law nor custom would permit him to dispense with.

This particular circumstance of the Greek tragedy, which occasioned them to smuggle as it were the dramatic fable on the public between the pauses of a musical composition, cannot fail of reminding us of the mode adopted by the provincial theatres to avoid the rigor of the law before the late act in their favor, by receiving money for a concert of music, and announcing a play to be acted gratis during the intervals [R].

## NOTE

[Q] From this custom of deviating from the original design of praising Bacchus in these odes, arose the Greek proverb Οὐδὲν πρὸς Διονυσίαν. ‘It has nothing to do with Bacchus,’ which was applied generally to any thing introduced foreign to the subject in question.

[R] By such a subterfuge was the illustrious Garrick first ushered to the public notice. The curious reader will not be displeased to see a copy of the bill that announced him. ‘Goodman’s Fields, October 19, 1741. At the late theatre in Goodman’s Fields, this day will be performed, a concert of vocal and instrumental music, divided into two parts. Tickets at three, two, and one shilling. Places for the boxes to be taken at the Fleece Tavern, near the theatre. N. B. Between the two parts of the concert will be presented an historical play, called The Life and Death of King Richard the Third: containing the distresses of King Henry VI. the artful acquisition of the crown by King Richard, the murder of young King Edward the Fifth and his brother in the Tower; the landing of the Earl of Richmond, and the death of King Richard, in the memorable battle of Bosworth Field, being



## THE EXODE.

THE exode does not mean the catastrophe of the fable, but the conclusion of the piece, though the catastrophe was often comprehended in it; it was in effect the last act. The Greek tragedies, like ours, generally end with some moral sentence drawn from the events of the fable. All those of Sophocles do. Euripides makes the same sentence serve for several plays. These are usually spoken by the chorus, not sung, for the distinction of the exode is its following the last ode of the chorus.

‘ being the last that was fought between the houses of York and Lancaster; with many  
 ‘ other true historical passages. The part of King Richard, BY A GENTLEMAN, (WHO  
 ‘ NEVER APPEARED ON ANY STAGE.) King Henry, by Mr. Giffard; Richmond, by  
 ‘ Mr. Marshall; Prince Edward, by Miss Hippisley; Duke of York, Miss Naylor; Duke  
 ‘ of Buckingham, Mr. Peterson; Duke of Norfolk, Mr. Blakes; Lord Stanley, Mr. Pagett;  
 ‘ Oxford, Mr. Vaughan; Tressel, Mr. William Giffard; Catesby, Mr. Marr; Ratcliff,  
 ‘ Mr. Crofts; Blunt, Mr. Naylor; Tyrrel, Mr. Puttenham; Lord Mayor, Mr. Dunstall;  
 ‘ the Queen, Mrs. Steele; Dutchess of York, Mrs. Gates; and the part of Lady Anne, by  
 ‘ Mrs. Giffard. With entertainments of dancing, by Monf. Fromet, Madam Duval, and  
 ‘ the two Masters and Miss Granier. To which will be added, a Ballad Opera of one  
 ‘ act, called the Virgin Unmasked. The part of Lucy, by Miss Hippisley. Both of which  
 ‘ will be performed gratis by persons for their diversion. The concert will begin exactly at  
 ‘ six o’clock.’ This curiosity was communicated to me by Mr. William Giffard, one of the  
 performers, now (1791) living at Southampton, a gentleman in character and manners truly  
 respectable.

It



It was the custom of the Roman comic theatre for one of the characters to address the audience, and solicit their favor by saying *PLAUDITE*. This was partly followed by our elder comic writers who would frequently bring one of the characters forward to address the audience, in what was then called an epilogue. As for example in the epilogues to *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *As You Like It*. From this arose the modern epilogue which is now considered as an essential appendage to every new drama. This is sometimes spoken in the character that has been performed, as in the celebrated epilogue to the *Distressed Mother* which is still always called for whenever the play is acted. Sometimes in the person of the particular actor that speaks it, as in the epilogue to Dryden's *Tyrannic Love* spoken by Nell Gwin which begins,

' Hold, are you mad, you damn'd confounded dog !

' I am to rise and speak the epilogue [s].

And sometimes, indeed most commonly, as an indifferent person.

Many of our epilogues abound with wit and humour. That to the *Clandestine Marriage* is a kind of after-piece [T].

Much has been said both for and against these kind of ludicrous epilogues to tragedy. Thomson passes a severe sentence on them in the

[s] It is now universally the practice for the curtain to drop and the player to go out, and return again, even if the epilogue is spoken in character. Such a conduct as this of Dryden's is a direct avowal of the theatrical deception.

[T] For an instance of an epilogue supplemental to the tragedy, see Note II. Chap. XIII.

epilogue



epilogue to his *Tancred and Sigismunda*. The *Spectator*, No. 338, criticises the epilogue to the *Distressed Mother*, to which there is a very pert and superficial answer by the author of the epilogue himself, (Budgel), as appears by the signature in the *Spectator*, No. 341. Our philosophical critic would certainly have condemned this custom, as every one must who considers it as the object of tragedy to make any serious impression on the mind, and not be considered merely as the amusement of the moment. A humorous after-piece has something of the same effect, but not in the same degree, as the epilogue in question is a ludicrous censure on the [u] incidents of the piece. Budgel justifies his prologue from the French custom of closing their tragic entertainments with a ridiculous PETITE PIECE, a custom but lately introduced here during the first nine nights of a new play; and if we credit a French writer in preference to Mr. Budgel, the practice was the same on the French stage at the time his defence was written, (1712). ‘The custom of giving a small piece after the larger has only been established since the year 1722. The larger pieces at first acting were constantly performed by themselves, and a smaller piece was never added till after the eighth or tenth representation, and which was always considered then as a symptom that the play was likely not to be well received. To obviate this opinion, sometimes ill founded, but always prejudicial, M. de la Mothe caused a petite piece to be played the first night of the representation of his tragedy of *Romulus*, and the practice has been continued ever since.’ DICTIONNAIRE D’ANECDOTES, ART. COMEDIE FRANÇOISE. Under the same article is a ridiculous anecdote relative to the tragedy, from which the *Distressed Mother* is nearly a translation. ‘A grave magistrate who had never

[u]. See conclusion of Note II. Chap. VI.



‘ been at a play, was persuaded to go by some of his friends from the  
 ‘ assurance they gave him that he would receive much entertainment  
 ‘ from the tragedy of Andromache. He was very attentive to the play  
 ‘ which was followed by a farce called the Pleadars. On coming out  
 ‘ he met the author, and meaning to pay him a compliment, said to  
 ‘ him, “ I am vastly pleased with your Andromache. It is really a  
 “ capital piece; but yet I own I am a little surpris’d you make it end  
 “ so merrily. I was once very near crying, but when those comical  
 “ little dogs appeared I could not help laughing.”

It is with regret I observe, that the modern drama is again adopting the custom of the actors addressing the audience at the conclusion of the piece. Besides the absurdity of this practice [w], which tends to destroy the effect of the scene, it is attended with the grossest and most

[w] Every allusion to the drama, in a drama, is out of place, and absurd. Lessing, Vol. i. p. 204, censures this passage in the Merope of Maffei, both from this reason, and on account of the anachronism in mentioning the scene before the existence of the drama.

‘ Con così strani avvenimenti forse

‘ Non vide mai favoleggiar le scene.’

‘ Ne’er has the scene such strange events display’d.’

Dryden has been guilty of both these errors in the speech he puts into the mouth of Œdipus, which begins,

‘ O that as oft at Athens I have seen

‘ The stage arise, and the big clouds descend.’——

and of one of them in Love Triumphant, where Veramond compares the catastrophe to the

——‘ winding up of some design,

‘ Well form’d upon the crowded theatre.’

Our great poet of nature is but too much addicted to this practice.

fervile



servile flattery. The insolent tranquillity with which an audience will receive the highest strains of adulation under the specious appellation of THE PUBLIC is no bad specimen of the respect a [x] democratic assembly has for the rights and equality of mankind. I have blushed for my countrymen when I have seen them in a body receive almost adoration from a lovely and accomplished actress which any individual of them would have been proud to offer.

I am sorry to add, that this disgraceful practice is not confined to the musical drama. To the best of my recollection, it was first revived in a regular and excellent comedy, The Clandestine Marriage. The tragic muse has, I believe, hitherto kept herself clear of this degradation.

[x] Left I should be thought, in this sentence to be libelling the House of Commons, I beg leave to observe, that neither that assembly, nor any representative body whatever, can be called democratical. All representatives are, to use the words of Colonel Mitford, 'persons elected by the people to legislative authority, for merit real or supposed.' SEE HISTORY OF GREECE, Chap. v. Sect. i. Our House of Commons has besides distinction of rank, which evidently must arise from the qualification of property required. To quote the words of our Critic where he is defining the different forms of government, ὅπου ἡ πολιτεία βλέπει εἰς τὴν πλοῦτον, καὶ ἀρετὴν, καὶ δῆμον, οἷον ἐν Καρχηδόνι, αὕτη ἀριστοκρατικὴ ἐστίν. ARIST. POLIT. L. IV. C. VIII. 'When the form of the commonwealth looks up to riches, to virtue, and to the opinion of the people, as in Carthage it is aristocratical.' I wish to know how the qualifications of a member of parliament could be more exactly expressed, a certain quantity of property, merit real or supposed, and popularity.



## NOTE IV.

## THE CHORUS.

[y] WE have already traced the origin of this appendage to the ancient tragedy; and shewn that it was not at least invented for the purpose of heightening either the probability of dramatic representation, or assisting its moral tendency. That it has these effects, as well as some other collateral advantages has been the opinion of some of the most judicious critics both of the French and English school. I shall therefore examine how far this opinion appears to be founded on truth; dividing my enquiry into three heads. The effect of the chorus, on dramatic probability. On the moral influence of the drama. And on the conduct of the fable, by preventing unmeaning conversation between confidants, officers, &c. for the sake of unfolding events to the audience which they could not otherwise learn. For on these three points all the arguments in favor of the chorus seem to rest.

And first as to the probability. The bishop of Worcester in his notes on the Epistle to the Pisos makes the following observation: 'A chorus interposing, and bearing a part in the progress of the action gives the representation that probability, and striking resemblance of real life which [z] EVERY MAN OF SENSE perceives, or feels the

[y] See Note II. this chapter.

[z] With all my respect for this elegant critic, I think he has gone a little too far in branding all who differ in opinion with him on, at least a disputed hypothesis, with folly. It favors a little of the concluding decree in Bramston's 'Man of Taste.'

' This is true taste, and who so likes it not,

' Is blockhead, coxcomb, puppy, fool, and sot.'

' want



'want of, upon our stage; a want which nothing but such an expedient as the chorus can possibly supply.' In this passage probability of action is evidently confounded with probability of representation. If the fable is well formed, the situations affecting, the language adapted to the passion, and these assisted by the natural expression and powers of the actor [A], without doubt the illusion is complete. We are hurried away by our feelings, and we yield to the impression of the scene. But in this case we never enquire where we are, or how it is possible such a scene should pass before such a number of spectators as surround us; at such a question the whole delusion vanishes, and instead of being in the castle of Macbeth, or the tent of King John, we instantly find ourselves in the Theatre Royal.

It is impossible for any notion to be more unfounded on truth than that which supposes that no dramatic action can have the requisite probability for public representation that may not be supposed to pass before spectators, and that consequently a dramatic audience before whom the real action is supposed to pass is necessary both to encrease the probability of the scene, and confine the poet to such events as may naturally happen in public. It is proved beyond a doubt that when we reflect for an instant, a momentary suspension of the delirium in which we

[A] It may tend to some elucidation of this subject to enquire how the force of dramatic illusion is effected by the being acquainted with the voice and person of the actors, or by being in habits of intimacy with them. I think there is no doubt that the different effects of the itinerant preacher, and the regular clergyman on the lower part of the congregation, arises in great measure, though not entirely, from this. But then in this case the difference arises from the opinion entertained as to their being really in earnest, and the little opportunity there is of seeing in one how his doctrine may be contradicted by his life; while an actor, however strange to us, is always known to be an actor.



are involved by the combined arts of poet and the player, convinces us where we really are. The ornaments of the theatre, however well adapted to the play, (and, when well adapted, they certainly encrease the delusion while it lasts, and flatter our love of propriety when it ceases,) no more deceive us than if the performance were in an indifferent room. The moment therefore we come to consider that there are other spectators besides ourselves, this disenchantment is effected.

[B] In fact, the border of the stage may be considered as the frame of a picture, dividing the real from the imaginary scene; and there is no more impropriety in imagining an action, or conversation of the most private nature, to pass before a crowded theatre, than for a picture of Diana bathing to be shewn in a full exhibition room at the Royal Academy. That real delusion may have taken place in weak or in deranged minds I will not deny. A countryman who had never seen a play might mistake the representation for the reality; and if they are not founded on truth, at the least there is no improbability in the stories of the [c] clown, who got up to go out on the entrance of the players

[B] Since the above was written I have had the pleasure to see the same remark made and illustrated in Mr. Saunders's Treatise on Theatres. 'A division is necessary between the theatre and the stage, and should be so characterised as to assist the idea of their being two distinct places.'—'Were a painted frame to be proposed for a picture, how would the connoisseurs exclaim! The scene is the picture, the frontispiece is the frame, or in other words, the frame should contrast the picture, and thereby add to the delusion.' P. 36, 84.

[c] I once was present at the representation of The Recruiting Officer by a strolling company, when a country fellow rather weak in his intellects went upon the stage to enlist as Serjeant Kite was distributing the king's picture. It appeared he was serious in his intent, from his enlisting with the first recruiting party that came into the town afterwards.



as imagining them discoursing on private business; and the sailor who, provoked to see the death of Essex likely to happen from the countess of Nottingham concealing the ring when Elizabeth asked her,

‘What, said he nothing of a private import?’

‘No circumstance—no pledge—no ring!’

on Nottingham’s answering ‘none!’ roared out from the gallery, ‘It is a d—d lie, for I saw him give it her myself.’ The behaviour therefore of Partridge, at the representation of Hamlet in Tom Jones is not unnatural, any more than that of Don Quixote among the puppets, since the same man who mistook a windmill for a giant, might easily suppose a puppet-show to be a reality.

All the consequences then of this boasted additional probability which tragedy would derive from the use of a chorus seem to be these. First, it must oblige the poet to confine the time of action within the precise time of the representation. For when this time is exceeded on the Grecian stage, of which there are many instances, the natural and probable unity of time is violated from the continual presence of the chorus, notwithstanding the latitude allowed by Aristotle [D]. And secondly, without any reason founded on the truth of representation, it deprives him of situations in every respect the most interesting, and most fitted to the purpose of tragedy that his imagination can conceive. Indeed the stilt, the monstrous mask, and the unnatural recitation of the ancient theatre, made the chorus not so great an encumbrance there as it would be on ours. The effect of the Grecian drama was almost universally derived from great and striking events, and seldom from the

[D] See Note III. Chap. v.

dialogue,



dialogue which is so great a source both of terror and distress on our stage. The most affecting scenes on the modern theatre, and which give the most ample scope to the genius of the poet, and the exertions of the player, are those where one character is working on the feelings of another; scenes, of which if there are any, there are only faint traces to be discovered in the Grecian tragedy, and which indeed are utterly incompatible with the constant presence of a chorus. Surely the most sanguine admirer of antiquity cannot hesitate a moment in condemning an hypothesis which, if received, must immediately banish from the stage the scenes between Lady Macbeth and her husband, Iago and Othello, and King John and Hubert.

Before I quit the probability of the chorus, I must beg to cite a passage from M. Brumoy in favor of it. 'I know,' he says, 'it has some inconveniencies, and it has sometimes thrown the ancients into errors against probability, but its advantages infinitely more than balance its inconveniencies. [E] Sophocles knew how to get rid of the chorus for a few moments when he had occasion to do it; as in his Ajax. It is the poet therefore, and not the chorus that ought to be blamed when he is put to inconvenience by it.' I perfectly agree with M. Brumoy in this position, that the poet is solely to blame who admits the chorus where he can get rid of it (as every modern poet can) in every place where it cannot be admitted with propriety, and this I think comprehends every part of the action. Between the acts it might be admitted with strict propriety, but it is perhaps impracticable from a reason already mentioned [F]. M. Brumoy then proceeds to state the conveniencies of the chorus, which are those

[E] See Note III. Chap. XI.

[F] See Note II. Chap. VI.



already mentioned, and concludes with a description of the [G] dance which accompanied the choral ode, I suppose, as a decisive proof of the PROBABILITY it gave to dramatic representation.

We next come to the moral effect of the chorus, or the advantage the drama derives in this respect from the remarks made on the conduct and sentiments of the characters during the course of the action. This has afforded the critics an ample field for panegyric, and the opinion has been supported by some names highly eminent both for genius and learning. Mr. Mason in his Letters on Elfrida, (Letter iv. near the end), after having mentioned Pierre as a character much 'calculated to leave false and immoral impressions on the spectator,' adds, that he knows of none more capable of 'doing service in a moral view, when justly animated on by a chorus;' and says further, that bad characters become on this plan as harmless in the hands of the poet as the historian. The case of the historian and the poet here, however, are widely different. The historian must recite facts as they are, or at least as he is informed they are, and therefore if they are so arranged as to be liable to make wrong impressions, as he cannot alter the arrangement, he must step forward in his own person, and make the necessary comment on

[G] The chorus was arranged in three ranks, of five each when consisting of fifteen performers, and four when of twelve, who imitated in their evolutions the supposed motion of the heavenly bodies. Turning from right to left in imitation of the daily movement of the firmament from east to west while the first stanza was performing, which received from thence the name of STROPHE; and from left to right in imitation of the occasional movement of the planets from west to east during the second stanza or ANTISTROPHE; and remaining fixed during the third stanza or EPODE to mark the stability of the earth. Ben Jonson, in the first regular imitation we have of the Grecian ode, calls these stanzas by the names of turn, counterturn, and stand.

the



the action. But it is the poet's fault if his action requires any such comment at all, as it is in his option to arrange his incidents as he chuses. If the poet really draws his fable, or forms his characters in such a manner as to have an immoral tendency, it is in vain for a chorus to come forward and try to explain it away or efface by words an impression that has been made by incident. And if the fable and characters have on the whole a moral tendency, whatever partial and temporary passages may have a contrary appearance in the course of the representation, any transient impression of that sort must be removed in the end without having recourse to so inartificial an expedient as the introduction of a chorus. 'If the manners either of a vicious or a ridiculous character are well marked either in tragedy or comedy, his words can have no dangerous effect on the audience even at the moment; because the spectator will never regulate his own conduct, and sentiments, by those of a person, who from the opening of the piece is proposed to him as an example of error and misfortune.'—TERRASSON.

This interference of the chorus is like the moral usually added to fables written for children, and the inutility of these is fairly demonstrated by Rousseau, in his *Emilius* [H], when he is speaking of the impropriety of putting the fables of La Fontaine into their hands.

In short, if the poet has drawn vice amiable, and virtue contemptible or repelling, it is in vain for him to endeavour to alter the impression by a chorus. Indeed, we never want a chorus to define right from wrong. Do we want a chorus to tell us that Lovelace is an accomplished villain, and Grandison a pattern of consummate virtue? and yet there is something so repelling in the virtue of the one, and so amiable



in the manners of the other, that we can neither hate Lovelace nor like Grandison; therefore to use, with some alteration, the decision of M. Brumoy above quoted, 'It is the poet therefore and not the absence of the chorus that is to be blamed, when he is put to inconvenience by the want of it.'

How cold, how unaffecting, how superfluous, would the animadversion of a chorus be on the sufferings of a Lear, or the crimes of a Macbeth, compared with the utterance of their own feelings and the effect of them on the other persons of the drama. It is THEIR expression of pity and terror! It is the horror shewn by the physician and attendant during Lady Macbeth's walking dream, and the indignation of Falconbridge at Hubert, as the supposed murderer of Arthur, that resemble the two horses in Le Brun's picture, 'who start back, with their hair standing an end lest they should trample on the bleeding infants;' [I] and not the dull unimpassioned reflections of a chorus. [K] A most elegant and judicious dramatic critic observes, 'that though it is the office of the chorus, on the Grecian stage, to moralize, and to point out on every occasion the advantages of virtue over vice, yet how much less affecting are their animadversions than the testimony of the person concerned! Whatever belongs to the chorus has hardly the effect of dramatic imitation. The chorus is, in a manner, without personal character or interest, and no way an agent in the drama. We cannot sympathize with the cool reflections of these idle spectators as we do with the sentiments of the persons in whose circumstances and situation we are interested.'

[I] See quotation from the Abbe Vatri, cited by Mr. Mason in Letter IV, on *Elfrida*.

[K] See Mrs. Montague's Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare.



Should the dramatic writer, however find himself at a loss for want of a chorus, and not be contented or able to deduce the proper effect from the incidents and active characters of the piece, he must create one for the purpose of making moral reflections, which is always in his power, since, as Brumoy observes, 'the chorus, properly speaking was the 'honest man of the piece.' Therefore the poet may as well give this office to a Menenius, or an Ænobarbus, as to twelve or fifteen citizens or captives.

It seems even the chorus did not always execute their office to the satisfaction of the people of Athens. We are told by Ælian, that Æschylus was condemned by the senate for the impiety of one of his plays, and saved only by the intercession of his brother, who moved the compassion of the assembly by shewing his arm without the hand, which he had lost at the battle of Salamis. And Seneca relates a similar story of Euripides, from which the Bishop of Worcester infers the necessity of a chorus, though some people perhaps may think it rather shews its inefficacy: and that if the tendency of the action appears immoral to the spectators, a by-stander will never be able to persuade them it is moral.

It now remains to notice the supposed advantage of the chorus, in obviating the necessity of introducing useless confidants merely to say yes or no, while the principal characters are disclosing their secrets through them to the audience. But in fact, the difference of the ancient and modern theatre amounts only to this; an injudicious modern poet, who has no better mode of unfolding his fable to the spectator, invents a useless character; whereas an ancient poet, in the same predicament avails himself of one that the custom of the theatre supplies. But the impropriety



propriety is exactly the same, except that in one case the confident is alone, and in the other accompanied by attendants.

Mr. Mason, in his third letter on the tragedy of *Elfrida*, which he was advised to adapt to the modern stage, allows that, 'undoubtedly, most part of the dialogue of the chorus might be put into the mouth of an Emma, or Matilda, who with some little shew of sisterly concernment, might easily be made to claim kindred with Earl Athelwood.'

I would not wish that the beautiful poems of *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* were in any respect different from what they are. They are above all criticism and all commendation; and we may surely allow Mr. Mason to be partial to a species of drama in which he has, in every eye not blinded by partiality to the ancients, at least equalled the noblest models of antiquity. But in regard to the subject we are considering, dramatic propriety, the confident he mentions would be at least as proper as the Coryphæa of his chorus, who appears to be only *Elfrida's* principal female servant; since Orgar, speaking to the chorus, says,

'Your garbs bespeak you for the fair attendants

'Of some illustrious dame, the wife or sister

'Of this dread Earl.'—

and the answer allows the suggestion.

— 'well we know

'Fidelity's a virtue that ennobles

'Even servitude itself.'—

They should not therefore in the *dramatis personæ*, be styled 'chorus of British virgins,' but 'of *Elfrida's* attendants.'



It is besides much more improbable for a character to impart a secret to twelve or fifteen persons than one. Of this the ancient tragic poets were aware, and often make their characters answer boldly for the fidelity of their numerous confidential friends. In the *Electra* of Sophocles, Orestes is cautious of speaking out before the chorus, consisting of Argive young women: but *Electra* encourages him.

[L] OREST. 'I would tell you, if these women are friends.'

ELECT. 'But they are friends; therefore you will speak before those who may be trusted.'

In the *Cœphori* of Æschylus, Orestes is obliged to exhort the chorus, who are also women, in rather harsher terms than was consistent with their independance [M]. 'I would advise you to govern your tongues properly; to be silent when it is necessary, and speak only what is convenient.' And in the *Electra* of Euripides, Orestes shews the same caution as in the tragedy of Sophocles, and receives the same assurance from his sister.

[N] OREST. 'Are these, who hear our conversation friends?'

ELECTRA. 'So much so, as carefully to keep all we say secret.'

[L] Εγὼ φράσαιμι' αὖ, εἰ τὸ τῶνδ' εὐνὴν παρὰ.

Ἀλλ' ἔστιν εὐνὴν ὥς πρὸς πιστὰς ἑρέϊς.

[M] Ὑμῖν δ' ἐπαινῶ γλῶσσαν εὐφημον φερεῖν

Σιγᾶν θ' ὅπῃ δεῖ, καὶ λέγειν τὰ καίρια.

[N] Αἰδ' ἐν φίλαι σοι τῆς δ' ἀκούσιν λόγους;

Ως εὖ γέγειν γε τὰ μὰ, καὶ σ' ἐπη κάλως.

The



The inconvenience of a chorus to the poet, when he chuses a subject unfit for their continued presence, though in every other respect proper for the drama, is no where shewn more clearly than in the *Hippolytus* of Euripides. Indeed, it offends both against probability and morality. Nothing can be more improbable than for a woman to trust an incestuous passion to her confidante before several other indifferent women: and nothing more immoral than for these women to promise to keep it secret, and to fulfil that promise though it occasioned the death of an innocent person. Those who have a mind to see how a person can defend an hypothesis he favors, in defiance of his own reason and conviction, will be entertained with Brumoy's remarks on this tragedy; where, after all his arguments, he is obliged to allow their sophistry, and the real and radical defects of the chorus. 'If these excuses, (he says) though drawn from Euripides himself, appear too far-fetched, and are not satisfactory to those who criticise the ancient theatre; these critics will agree, at least, that by these means the poet has diminished with a great deal of art the defect almost inseparable from the chorus, whose eternal presence produces a spectacle always fine, often necessary, but sometimes embarrassing to the principal actors. We see, plainly, that Euripides wished to avoid this defect, and yet retain the chorus: for if this many-headed personage had been ignorant of Phædra's passion, it must have been mute and inactive. It would have become useless, and would have deprived the scene of one of its most brilliant ornaments.' [o].

[o] Le Pere Brumoy has made a false criticism on the *Hippolytus* of Seneca; he blames the poet for suffering Hippolytus to leave his sword in the hands of Phædra, 'a thing (he says) contrary to the manners of the Greeks, who were never armed but on a journey or in war.' I believe the critic forgot that Hippolytus was just returned from the chase.

I shall



I shall conclude this long note with Mr. Twining's summary, though comprehensive view of the progress and decline of the chorus. 'At first it was all; then relieved by the intermixture of dialogue, but still principal; then subordinate; then digressive, and ill-connected with the piece; then borrowed from other pieces at pleasure; and so on to the fiddles, and act tunes, at which Dacier is so angry.'



## C H A P. XIII.

## NOTE I.

THOSE WHO ARE REPRESENTED AS FALLING FROM HAPPINESS TO MISERY, SHOULD NOT BE PERSONS OF EXTRAORDINARY VIRTUE, AS THAT WOULD EXCITE DISGUST, RATHER THAN PITY, OR TERROR.

THIS rule is so just, and so consonant with our feelings, that I believe the modern drama will hardly furnish us with an instance of a person of exemplary virtue suffering distress unless it is brought about by some irregular passion of his own. Perhaps in the prose epopee *Clarissa* may fall under this error: since, she is a character drawn as nearly perfect as possible; for surely the single imprudent step she took is not sufficient to obviate the objection. I do not, therefore, scruple to declare my opinion that this much-admired work is faulty in this respect. The same objection also lies against the sufferings of *Clementina* in *Grandison*. Whom, by the way, *Richardson* has really, though undesignedly, made the heroine of his piece; a confirmation of the opinion advanced in the preceding note, that we judge of, and are affected by the characters from their actions and manners, and not from what the poet chuses to tell us, either in his own person or in that of a fictitious agent.



## NOTE II.

NEITHER SHOULD VICIOUS CHARACTERS BE SHEWN AS RISING  
FROM MISERY TO HAPPINESS.

THE justness of this remark is also confirmed by our own feelings, and the uniform practice of all the imitative poets. Dr. Young in his tragedy of the Brothers being obliged from the circumstances and length of his fable to end his drama at a juncture when the villainy and artifice of Perseus appear to be completely successful, has thought it necessary to anticipate his future misfortunes and disgrace in a supplementary epilogue, which begins thus :

- ' An epilogue, thro' custom, is your right ;
- ' But ne'er, perhaps, was needful till to-night.
- ' To-night the virtuous falls, the guilty flies,
- ' Guilt's dreadful close our narrow scene denies.' [A]

[A] See note III, chap. XII.

NOTE



## NOTE III.

NEITHER SHOULD A VERY BAD MAN BE REPRESENTED AS FALLING FROM HAPPINESS TO MISERY; FOR THOUGH SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT MIGHT BE AGREEABLE TO OUR FEELINGS, IT WOULD EXCITE NEITHER PITY NOR TERROR. FOR ONE OF THESE PASSIONS IS EXCITED BY THE MISFORTUNES OF AN INNOCENT PERSON; THE OTHER BY THE MISFORTUNES OF A PERSON IN THE SAME SITUATION WITH OURSELVES;—SUCH AN EVENT, THEREFORE, WOULD BE NEITHER DISTRESSFUL NOR ALARMING.

IT is very obvious that Aristotle [B], though he blames this mode of arranging the fable, at least prefers it to that which he has last mentioned, as not incurring the double defect of being disagreeable to our feelings, and at the same time not calculated to excite either pity or terror, and therefore totally repugnant to the nature and end of tragedy. What were the sentiments of the critic with regard to the comparative demerits of this, and the first mode, we can only conjecture, as he is himself silent on the subject; but from the general doctrine he advances, (at least in this chapter,) we must suppose his sentence would be most in favor of the first, as having tragic effect, though disagreeable to our feelings.

The Fatal Curiosity of Lillo, which [c] Mr. Harris (I suppose by

[B] See note VI. chap. XVIII.

[c] See Philological Enquiries, p. 154. Mr. Harris seems to have mistaken the circumstance from which this play takes its name; he supposes the opening the casket to be the FATAL CURIOSITY, but I should rather conceive it to be the desire of the young man to see the effect of his unexpected return on his parents.



way of a dramatic paradox) has chosen to compare with the *Œdipus*, falls exactly under the censure of this passage. The misery arises from no sudden start of passion, or involuntary error, but from the cruel and deliberate murder of an innocent youth for the sake of his property. Would Mr. Harris (to anticipate a definition in the subsequent part of this chapter) allow this hoary ruffian, and his wife, who murder their sleeping guest with the same purpose and from the same motive as the midnight housebreaker, to be persons of high reputation and prosperity, whose misfortunes arise from some error of human frailty, and whose general characters and conduct in life are rather better and of higher dignity than the illustrious names produced from the annals of Greece; for so the critic says they ought to be if the circumstances allow it. This opinion of Mr. Harris seems to have in great measure arisen from the explanation he gives to the term [D] GOOD, (*χρησός*) as applied by Aristotle to manners.

It is to be remarked, that there is another arrangement which Aristotle has omitted; that of a virtuous character raised from distress to prosperity, which would at least on his own principles come under the same class with that which is the object of the present note, being agreeable to our feelings but not productive, according to his hypothesis, of tragic effect, though in reality it is capable of producing it in the highest degree. Since while the principal character, in whose favor the spectators must be most strongly interested appears involved in deep distress, and his destruction appears inevitable, the passions of pity and terror will be violently excited; and, if the tragedy possesses the most perfect form,

[D] *Philological Enquiries*, p. 170. For a different explanation of this term, see note 1, chap. xv.



[E] uniting the discovery, and peripetia with the catastrophe, this will continue through the greatest part of the piece. Aristotle himself says in this passage, that pity is excited by the sufferings of innocence, and there is no reason why the character should not also possess that equality of situation which he requires as calculated to raise terror. Perhaps on considering this subject very attentively, weighing all the reasoning of Aristotle on the subject, recollecting how capable such an arrangement is of producing pity and terror, and with what thin shades such a character may be distinguished from that which he afterwards points out as proper for tragedy, we may be the less surprised at his not being perfectly satisfied with his own hypothesis as to the tragic catastrophe. For to some such wavering of opinion I think, we must impute part of what he says on this subject in the next chapter [F].

When Aristotle speaks of similitude of character as essential to excite terror, it is obvious he does not mean as to rank in life, but as to disposition, virtue, and domestic connections; for high rank in life was necessary, both from the practice of the Greek theatre, and the doctrine of Aristotle, to the principal persons of tragedy. A private citizen of Athens, or of London, might be exactly in the same situation with Œdipus, though a monarch, as to every circumstance on which the distress of the tragedy turns. But though the tale of domestic sorrow in private life was not admitted, either into the drama or epopee in the time of Aristotle, he nevertheless could see, that the effects of pity and terror must increase in proportion to the resemblance of character in every

[E] See chap. xi.

[F] See note IV, chap. xiv. where there is an attempt to account for this seeming inconsistency on other principles.



respect. For he says in another place [G], 'We pity those who are our equals in age, in manners, in habits, in rank, and in family, since in all these circumstances of likeness, the same things are most likely to happen to ourselves; and we may conclude in general, that those events which we fear should happen to ourselves, excite our pity when they happen to others.'

As a farther illustration of this, and of what I have [H] before advanced, concerning the private life tragedy, especially in prose, I shall produce a quotation from the much admired work of the Abbé Barthelemi.

**ZOPIRUS.** And why do you not sometimes select these great misfortunes, from the events of private life? They would affect me much more strongly if I saw them continually happen on every side of me.

**THEODECTUS.** I do not know, if they were drawn by a skilful hand, whether they would not excite our feelings too strongly. When I take my examples from a rank much superior to your own, I leave you the liberty of applying them to yourself, and at the same time the hope of escaping their consequences.' VOYAGE DU JEUNE ANACHARSIS, Chap. LXXI. Tom. iv. p. 32. French Ed. 4to.

[G] Καὶ τοὺς ὁμοίους ἐλεῶσι καθ' ἡλικίαν, κατ' ἥθη, καθ' ἔξεις, κατ' ἀξιώματα, κατὰ γένει· ἐν πᾶσι γὰρ τούτοις, μᾶλλον φαίνεται καὶ αὐτῷ ἂν ὑπάρχει· ὅλως γὰρ καὶ ἐλᾶνθα δεῖ λαβεῖν, ὅτι ὅσα ἐφ' αὐτῶν φοβῆσθαι, ταῦτα ἐπ' ἄλλων γιγνόμενα ἐλεῶσιν. ARIST. RHET. L. II. CH. VII.

[H] See note 1, chap. iv.



The observations as to the equality of character, extend to unnatural perfection as well as to unnatural deformity, though in a less degree.

If a character is drawn compleatly vicious, it is impossible we can place ourselves so in the situation, as to bring it at all home to our own bosoms. We cannot interest ourselves in the fortune of a person, who we are conscious neither resembles ourselves nor any thing else in nature, or pity misfortunes which at once are the consequence and punishment of crimes we abhor. This excess of guilt is I believe seldom, if ever, assigned to a principal character, but it is sometimes to be met with in subordinate ones: Glenalvon is a consummate villain, without one quality to soften our indignation and disgust; [1] since his brutal courage, solely employed in treachery and affassination, only serves to encrease our detestation of him.

The defect of the too perfect character is not so obvious. We can indeed at once see that as to the first case, the want of interest on account of similarity of manners and situation, the consequence is nearly, if not exactly the same. I believe Sir Charles Grandison is much less a favorite with every reader than Tom Jones. But why we are less affected with pity by the sufferings of a perfect than an imperfect character, is not so clear. For if, as Aristotle says, pity is excited by misfortunes that are unmerited; this must apply most strongly to a character completely virtuous [κ]. The cause however why we do not sympathise so

[1] See note I, chap. xv.

[κ] In the passage quoted in note [c] from the Rhetoric, it appears that the passions of pity and terror, as laid down there by Aristotle, are only modifications of the same passion, distinguished by the force with which they act on our own feelings, and which both depend on the resemblance of the condition and character of the sufferer to those of our own.



much with the sufferings of a perfect as an imperfect character, may perhaps arise from this circumstance. The resolution in misfortune, the intrepidity in danger, the contempt of pain and death, which are always shewn in a great and heroic character, take off much of our sense of his distress. We may revere, we may wish to emulate such a character, but we cannot feel strongly for a person who disdains to feel for himself. [L] When Iphigenia throws herself at her father's feet, and by the most tender supplications requests him to spare her life, we feel the strongest impressions of pity; but when assuming a higher resolution, she resolves to devote herself for the glory of her country, we venerate the heroine indeed, but our tears for the trembling virgin are instantly dried. The observation of Horace,

[M] 'To make ME grieve be first YOUR anguish shewn,

' And I shall feel your sorrows like my own,' COLMAN.

is as applicable to the poet's imitation of the character as the actor's performance of it. There is a just observation in the Tatler (No. 30) on this singularity of feeling. Speaking of two rivals who were killed at the battle of Almanza, Steele makes this remark: 'The beloved lady is a woman of a sensible mind; but she has confessed to me, that after all her true and solid value for Constant, she had much more concern for the loss of Careless. These noble and serious spirits have something equal to the adversities they meet with, and consequently lessen the objects of pity. Great accidents seem not cut out so much for men of familiar characters, which makes them more easily pitied and soon after beloved.'

[L] In the Iphigenia in Aulis of Euripides. See note vi. chap. xv.

[M] — 'Si vis me flere, dolendum est

' Primum ipsi tibi.'

NOTE



## NOTE IV.

THE CHARACTER THAT REMAINS IS A MEDIUM BETWEEN THESE:

A MAN NEITHER EMINENTLY CONSPICUOUS FOR VIRTUE AND JUSTICE, NOR REDUCED TO MISERY BY WICKEDNESS AND VILLAINY; BUT RATHER ONE IN HIGH REPUTATION AND PROSPERITY SUFFERING THROUGH SOME HUMAN FRAILTY.

THIS choice of the proper character for tragedy is justified by reason and experience. The critic has already objected both to consummate virtue and consummate vice. The person he has now selected partakes enough of the first to interest us in his favor, and of the last to prevent our indignation and disgust at his sufferings. The crime, or the error, that occasions his distress, should not be brought upon him in consequence of a good action, (which sometimes happens in real life) or be even involuntary; neither should it arise from radical and deliberate villainy, but should result from some violent passion, or imprudent action, in a character not devoid of good qualities, though by no means perfect.

In such colors has Shakespear drawn most of his principal tragic characters. Lear without radical vice is rash and choleric; Macbeth in the beginning of the play, exhibits a continued struggle between honor and ambition; Othello acts under the influence of an ungovernable passion; Richard the Third appears an exception; and if we mean to reconcile the conduct of that play to this rule of Aristotle, we must I think adopt an excuse, mentioned indeed, but rejected by M. Lessing

in



[N] in his criticism on a German tragedy formed on the same story. 'I may be told, perhaps we must give up Richard: the piece indeed bears his name, but he is not for that reason the hero of it, nor the character by which the proper effect of tragedy is attained: he can only be considered as the cause of exciting our pity for others. Are not the queen and the princes objects of our pity?' The objection he starts to this, and it appears a just one, is that these characters are as improper from their innocence as Richard is from his guilt.

The King Richard of Shakespear however has so many strokes of courage and dignity in his character, that his vices are sometimes hidden by them, and Cibber has even made his rival Richmond bear testimony to his bravery when on the point of engaging him [o]. But no such circumstance attended the Richard of the German poet, who according to M. Lessing, 'is [p] so horrible a wretch, a devil incarnate so wicked, in whom it is so impossible for us to find the smallest trait of resemblance with ourselves, that I think we could see him suffer all the torments of hell before our eyes without being affected by it, without having the least fear, that if such punishment is the consequence of such crimes only, it can ever fall upon ourselves.' *Dramaturgie*, Part II. p. 35.

[N] *Dramaturgie*, Part II. p. 36.

[o] 'Nor should thy prowess Richard want my praise,  
'But that thy cruel deeds have stamp'd thee tyrant.'

[p] 'Un drôle si horrible.' If the French translator has done justice to his original in this expression, the German Richard must have been totally deficient in poetical goodness, taken in the sense in which I conceive it used by Aristotle in chapter xv. See note 1, on that chapter.

Modern



Modern manners have given to the theatre this desideratum of Aristotle; the *ἀμαρτία μεγάλη*, the GREAT FRAILTY as it is excellently expressed by Mr. Twining, which is capable of involving a character in the deepest and most pathetic distress, and at the same time so far from injuring its moral perfections, that it raises it in our esteem and occasions unmerited distress, without exciting either indignation or disgust. I mean the passion of love; that grand hinge on which modern fable, narrative as well as dramatic generally, I had almost said universally, turns. This passion is to be found in ancient fable, but without the same distinguishing character. It was considered like every other passion as a source of misfortune, and when ungovernable and carried to excess, as a vice. But in modern fable, however violent in its effects, it appears to stamp merit on the character in proportion to its force.

I have no doubt that if Mark Antony had been prior to Aristotle he would have conceived him as a very bad person falling from happiness to misery in consequence of his crimes, and consequently no proper subject for a tragic story. But the magic of this passion, dressed in the garb of modern gallantry, has changed his nature; and the inglorious death of an abandoned profligate in the lap of sloth and prostitution, becomes the glorious sacrifice of a generous hero at the shrine of disinterested love. Thomson's tragedy of Tancred and Sigismunda furnishes another instance of this kind. Old Siffredi, who fills the office of the ancient chorus, though throughout the piece he is continually urging Tancred to sacrifice his passion to his duty, in his concluding speech inculcates the necessity of indulging the passions. I much doubt if such sentiments would have been received with great applause by an Athenian audience.



Love is rather more conspicuous among the Roman poets; but the principal female character in the comedies of Terence is generally a prostitute, while the young woman of virtue is reduced to the situation of a mute. What are the Citheris, the Cynthia, the Delia and the Neæra of Gallus Propertius and Tibullus [Q], but mercenary harlots?

The observation of Voltaire on the passion of love, as a subject for the drama, seems perfectly just. 'It is,' he says, 'of all the passions the most theatrical, the most fertile in sentiments, the most varied. It ought to be the soul of a dramatic piece, or be entirely banished from it.' EPISTLE TO M. MAFFEI ON MEROPE. What Voltaire discovered through art, our Shakespear produced from nature near two centuries before. The passion of love is no where more the entire subject, or if you will the soul of the drama, than in Cymbeline and [R] Romeo and Juliet; but he has introduced no insipid love tale as an under plot in his Macbeth, his Othello, or any of his historical plays, as Addison has in his Cato, and Dryden and Corneille have in the tragedy of Œdipus. Shakespear however, the best master of general nature,

[Q] Hammond in his Love Elegies, is a direct translator of Tibullus: his manners are all Roman. He abuses his mistresses for their venality, and talks of making a campaign, not as his nobler editor suggests to forget Neæra, but to accumulate money to satisfy her avarice.

'And I through war must seek detested gold,

'Not for myself, but for my venal fair.'

ELEGY II.

I believe a campaign has seldom been the road to wealth except to the general and the commissary.

[R] Of this last tragedy Lessing says, 'I know but of one tragedy to which love has put his own hand, it is the Romeo and Juliet of Shakespear.' DRAMATURGIE, Part I. page 30.

knew



knew that love, though a very dramatic passion, was not the only one; and many, indeed most of his tragedies are founded on others. And a French critic says, 'However much we may be prejudiced in favor of those tragedies whose interest turns upon love, it is nevertheless true, (and we have often remarked it,) that those tragedies which have succeeded best, do not owe their success to the love scenes.' LETTER FROM LE PERE TOURNEMINE TO LE PERE BRUMOY, PREFIXED TO VOLTAIRE'S MEROPE. Now it is observable, that from the restoration till within these last five and twenty years, when Garrick had reformed the stage by the school of Shakespear, almost the only tragedies which do not depend on a love story are the Isabella of Southern, and the Venice Preserved of Otway; and to the great interest of both, the stage at this hour bears the strongest testimony. To Otway indeed may be applied, with the strictest justice, the character given by our critic to Euripides in this chapter, 'that if he does not conduct his fable so well in other circumstances he is allowed to be the most tragic of our poets.' Indeed what but the deep pathos of the catastrophe could induce a refined people to tolerate such a compilation of indecency, impiety, and immorality, as the Orphan [R].

From the secluded life of modest women in [s] Greece, they neither took any part in the serious concerns of life, out of their own family, nor could they be present at any public spectacle, therefore they were not in

[R] 'The famous Orphan of Otway, notwithstanding its real beauties, could hardly have taken so prodigiously as it hath done if there were not somewhere a defect of good sense as well as of good morals.' BISHOP OF WORCESTER'S NOTE ON HORACE'S ART OF POETRY, v. 19. See also Note I. Chap. xv.

[s] See Note II. *ibid.*



reality principal objects for the drama, which turned chiefly on public actions; nor was the theatre interested in obtaining their suffrages, by selecting those stories in which they might take a conspicuous part. The revival of the arts found women in a very different situation; in real life they were in high consideration, and in the regions of narrative fable they were, as they continue to be, every thing.

— Their bright eyes

- Rain'd influence and judg'd the prize
- Of wit and arms, while both contend
- To win her grace whom all commend.

We have therefore rather cause to wonder at their not assuming the same universal empire over the earlier modern drama, and that our first writers, and even Shakespear, have represented them actuated by ambition as often as by love, and as mothers, wives, and daughters, rather than as mistresses. But on considering that all womens parts were played by men before the civil wars, our wonder will cease, and we are rather inclined to think that very passionate love scenes, like some in Romeo and Juliet, must be more disgusting than pleasing [T].

After

[T] Besides the effect on the audience it must greatly influence the sensibility of the actor, on whose feelings the true expression of the passion, and consequently the feelings of the spectator must greatly depend, and these will be affected by a much smaller incongruity. To cite the words of a writer very well informed as to dramatic effect, (Hill's Actor, chap. xv.)

- As love can neither be concealed nor dissembled in real life before eyes that have any de-
- gree of discernment, so on the stage that illusion which is the soul of all theatrical represen-
- tations will never be well kept up in a love scene unless the persons who perform the cha-
- racters have hearts naturally susceptible of the passion; and we shall then see it in the
- greatest perfection when those who are to protest, and sigh, and vow to one another on the
- stage in reality sigh and doat on one another off. We can remember two persons who though
- they



After the restoration, when the theatre acquired its last and brightest ornament, the addition of beautiful and elegant female performers, love reigned unrivalled in the drama; and from that period for many years, except the tragedies just mentioned, no new drama was exhibited without a love tale either principal or subordinate. Of late years, as we have before observed, the stage has been taking a different turn. We have seen Douglas, the Grecian Daughter, and other tragedies of the same nature, brought forward with applause suitable to their merit. And this complexion of our drama seems to be encreasing. The peculiar abilities of a justly celebrated actress for the representation of matrons, though excellent in all parts, has occasioned love in almost every new tragedy to give place to conjugal and maternal affection; indeed, so much has the latter got possession of the theatre, that the introduction of a nursery is become almost a hacknied stage trick.

‘ they had both great merit as players, and had neither any thing of that dissolute life too frequent among those of their profession, yet when they were to be lovers on the stage never played naturally. It will be seen that I have in my eye Mr. and Mrs. ——. Happy as they were in one another the flat possession put an end to transport; and though perhaps enjoying something much worthier and better they could not dissemble that. We may on the other hand recollect instances, (but I shall not name the persons) where those who were pretended lovers on the stage were real lovers off it, and we never saw characters performed in such perfection.’ See Note VIII. Chap. xv. and Note II. Chap. xi. and Note II. Chap. xvii. as also the note immediately preceding this.



## NOTE V.

## OEDIPUS AND THYESTES.

METASTASIO is much dissatisfied with both these examples. He maintains that Thyestes is a character entirely vicious; and that Œdipus, to use his own words, ‘ is a man of so sublime and pure a virtue, that  
 ‘ to avoid the risk of becoming, as the oracle had menaced, incestuous  
 ‘ and a parricide, he quits what he believes to be his paternal house,  
 ‘ hazards the succession of a crown, and goes alone and voluntarily into  
 ‘ exile. He is a man of such exalted courage, that being attacked and  
 ‘ insulted by a multitude of persons, instead of flying he valiantly de-  
 ‘ fends himself though alone, kills one, wounds another, and disperses  
 ‘ the rest.’ *ESTRATTO DELLA POETICA*, page 259.

To this eulogy on Œdipus we may oppose the reasoning of Batteux.  
 ‘ It was in his power to avoid his crime and his misfortune, although  
 ‘ foretold by an oracle. This was the common belief of all Greece [u].  
 ‘ Laius believed that by destroying his son he should avoid his destiny;  
 ‘ Œdipus believed that by flying from Corinth, where he thought his  
 ‘ father and mother then lived, he should avoid the fatal disaster with

[u] I think this assertion wants foundation. Laius and Œdipus believed they could avoid their destiny, but the event of the fable shews the contrary was the received opinion of the time. The same may be said of Aftayges and Cyrus, and Cræsus and Atys, in Herodotus. There are a thousand stories modern as well as ancient of attempts to avoid foretold evil, but they are always unsuccessful. The apologue attributed to Æsop, of the young man who is killed by striking at the picture of a lion, is intended to enforce the impossibility of avoiding our destiny.

‘ which



‘ which he was threatened. Admonished as he was by the oracle,  
‘ should he have thought it sufficient to fly from Corinth? Should not  
‘ he have respected the age of every man who was of a time in life to  
‘ be his father? Should not he have been afraid of marrying any woman  
‘ of an age to be his mother? So far from taking this precaution, he  
‘ no sooner leaves Delphi than he kills the first man he meets, which  
‘ happens to be his father Laius; he arrives at Thebes; he triumphs  
‘ over the Sphinx; elated with his victory, and the offer of a crown,  
‘ he marries a woman who evidently might be his mother, since she  
‘ actually was so. His unhappiness therefore, was obviously the fruit  
‘ of his imprudence and his passions, and might serve for an example to  
‘ all the Greeks.’

To this it may be added, that the cause of Œdipus consulting the oracle was a doubt concerning his being the offspring of his supposed parents Polybius and Merope. Besides, we are to take the manners of Œdipus from the picture of him drawn by Sophocles, and he has evidently drawn him as a most violent and inconsistent character. In a scene between him and Jocasta, where she describes the manner of the death of Laius, he is instantly struck by the circumstance, and precipitately condemns himself, though Jocasta tries to console him; but in a subsequent scene, when Jocasta herself is convinced, and endeavours to dissuade him from further enquiry, he is obstinately resolved to see the shepherd, and instead of dreading the fatal discovery is in a rage from the suspicion of a design to represent him as a man of obscure birth.

The last speech of Œdipus before the entrance of Phorbas has a strong tendency to lessen our concern for his own horrid situation, and to encrease it for that of Jocasta. The chorus having expressed a dread of the effects



effects of the deep and silent grief shewn by the queen on her going out, Œdipus replies :

[w] ‘ Burst as it will ;—how mean foe’er my line,  
 ‘ I am resolv’d to take it home.—Perhaps,  
 ‘ (Such is the price of woman,) she disdains  
 ‘ My humble birth.—The child of fortune, I—  
 ‘ Blest in HER smile, such groundless scorn despise.—  
 ‘ HER care maternal ; and the kindred months  
 ‘ With gradual course from life’s inferior scenes  
 ‘ Have rais’d me up to greatness : for my lineage,  
 ‘ Whate’er it be, enquiry cannot change it.’

There are some strokes in the soliloquy of the Bastard in King Lear not unlike part of this speech ; and perhaps the reader will trace some resemblance between one passage in it, and a reflection of Macbeth.

‘ Come what, come may,  
 ‘ Time and the hour run thro’ the roughest day.’

[w] Ὅποῖα χρήζει ρηγνύτω τ’ ἐμὸν δ’ ἐγὼ  
 Κ’ εἰ σμικρὸν ἐστὶ σπέρμ’, ἰδεῖν βουλήσομαι.  
 Ἀυτὴ δ’ ἴσως, (φρονεῖ γὰρ γυνὴ μέγα,)  
 Τὴν δυσγένειαν τὴν ἐμὴν αἰσχύνεται.  
 Ἐγὼ δ’ ἐμαυτὸν παῖδα τῆς τύχης νέμων,  
 Τῆς εὖ διδάσσης, οὐκ ἀτιμασθήσομαι.  
 Τῆς γὰρ πέφυκα μητρός· οἱ δὲ συγγενεῖς  
 Μῆνές με μικρὸν καὶ μέγαν διώρισαν.  
 Τοιόςδε δ’ ἐκφύς οὐκ ἂν ἐξέλθοιμ’, ἔτι  
 Πότ’ ἄλλος, ὥς μὴ κ’ μαθεῖν τ’ ἐμὸν γένος.

As



As to Thyestes, those who are determined never to find Aristotle and the Greeks in the wrong, may at least allow him to be as good a character as Richard the Third. Though to speak candidly, I rather think them both exceptions to the rule laid down by Aristotle than examples to illustrate it.

## NOTE VI.

NOW, THE SUBJECTS OF THE BEST TRAGEDIES ARE TAKEN  
FROM A FEW FAMILIES.

IN the time of Aristotle, the walk both of history and fable was confined within very narrow limits. [x] The transactions of Greece and Persia were the principal, and indeed the only objects of history properly so called, for that part of the works of Herodotus which does not relate to those countries, is rather the compilation of the traveller than the narration of the regular historian; and fable was confined to the Grecian mythology. Our dramatic field is greatly enlarged. Besides possessing almost every story proper for the drama which was known when Aristotle wrote, we have the additional advantage of events drawn from the annals of more than twenty succeeding centuries, with all the variety of incident and manners that must arise from the adventures, the customs, and prejudices of different ages, governments and climates, and all the combinations that memory and imagination have been able to form out of such an immense mass of matter. 'It is true,' as Bossu observes, 'that the ancients could not foresee what would happen after them:

[x] See Note iv. Chap. ix.



‘ but he, (Boffu) who had the advantage of seeing it, might have employed it to shew the possibility of composing poems that would possess more incident, more striking situations, more manners, more pictures of human actions; in fine, more examples of every kind than can be found in the ancient poets.’ TERRASSON ON THE ILIAD. Perhaps there is something a little invidious in this observation; for the chief object of Terrasson seems to be the depreciation of Homer. That Homer from the scanty materials he possessed should have been able to form works containing such vast variety of incident and manners, as the Iliad and the Odyssey, and that Aristotle from his writings, and their copiers the tragic poets, should have been able to deduce rules so generally applicable to the nature of imitative composition even at the present day, must excite at once our wonder and veneration. Nevertheless though the general precepts are so perfectly just, as being founded on truth and nature, it is impossible they can strictly apply to all the variety of subjects which have enlarged the sphere of epic and dramatic fable in the course of succeeding ages. We may trace in the institutions of Alfred the great outline of the British constitution, and find those striking canons of polity and freedom which the accumulated wisdom of centuries has never attempted, and I trust never will attempt to alter or amend; for in politics as well as poetics, all alteration of excellence is corruption. But at the same time that we allow this, we cannot expect to find in a code of laws framed for a rude people, and comparatively a circumscribed dominion, every regulation necessary for the government of a powerful and commercial empire, and its refined and luxurious inhabitants.



## NOTE VII.

THE SECOND FORM, WHICH IS ESTEEMED THE FIRST BY SOME, IS THAT WHICH HAS A DOUBLE COMPOSITION LIKE THE ODYSSEY; HAVING A DIFFERENT CATASTROPHE FOR THE VIRTUOUS AND VICIOUS. THIS FORM APPEARS TO BE THE FIRST, FROM THE WEAKNESS OF THE SPECTATORS, WHICH THE POETS ARE INDUCED TO FOLLOW, AND COMPOSE THEIR PLAYS TO GRATIFY THE FEELINGS OF THE AUDIENCE.

WHY it should be the duty of a poet not to gratify the feelings of his audience, or why it should be a weakness in the audience to wish to see virtue rewarded and vice punished in the catastrophe, provided the passions of pity and terror have been strongly excited during the course of the drama, is I confess totally beyond my comprehension. If the principal person of the piece, on our interest for whom the general interest of the drama must depend, is to be shewn as falling from happiness to misery, through some great frailty, short of any species of guilt that shall sink him in our esteem; and is to be represented happy till the catastrophe of the piece, in the catastrophe only will the tragic impression be made. Or if the distress begin with the drama, and gradually increase till the fatal catastrophe, the peripetia or sudden revolution of fortune will be wanting. It is impossible however to reduce to rules that which can be only tried by the criterion of our feelings; and from the passage before us it is obvious that the feelings of the Athenians



were in opposition to the opinion of the Stagirite; and from a former part of the chapter it is equally clear that Euripides had been censured by his countrymen for forming his tragedies on the plan afterwards approved by Aristotle, though many of his tragedies, especially his *Alcestes*, his [v] *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and his *Ion*, besides the *Cresphontes*, which will be particularly noticed in a note on the next chapter, are written in the popular form. Whatever might be Aristotle's motive for opposing the general taste of Athens in this particular, it still less applies to the modern drama. However elegant the taste of the ancients may have been, it is I think sufficiently obvious from all the classical writers that they were not so much alive to the feelings of sensibility as the moderns. We find few of those nice touches which mark the delicacy of the sensations, and which interest more than the strongest pictures of distress. The only striking instances I recollect of this kind, are the account of the behaviour and words of *Alcestes* when she supposes herself dying, in Euripides; and the elegant compliment of the wife of *Tigranes* to her husband, and the pathetic tale of *Abradatas* and *Panthea* in Xenophon's *Cyropædia*.

Neither did the Greek tragedy possess the power which the modern stage does of exciting pity and terror during the course of the action from nice and pathetic touches of passion and manners. Their theatre was not calculated for affecting situation; and therefore if the incidents themselves were not strikingly dreadful, little interest could be excited. Aristotle himself in the beginning of the next chapter, mentions the

[v] In the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, after the death of *Iphigenia* appears inevitable, she is saved by a machine, contrary to all probability as well as in opposition to the received fable. See the eleventh Pythian Ode of Pindar, and the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus.

repre-



representation and the combination of the incidents as the only means of exciting pity and terror: if therefore that representation and that combination were not very striking, they could have but little effect on a theatre, whose apparatus was so ill calculated to conceal the means of imitation. [z] For, after all that has been said of the dramatic probability of the ancient tragedy, encumbered as it was with its chorus, its exaggerated and unnatural recitation [A], its enormous masks and stilts as described by Julius Pollux and Lucian; its frequent instances of buffoonery, not put, like the similar passages in Shakespear into the mouth of servants and clowns, but uttered by heroes and kings, and blended with the most serious parts of the drama, we may surely say with Mr. Twining [B], that the Greek tragedy was in 'many respects 'a simple, unequal, imperfect thing.'

[c] The modern theatre is very different; the means of imitation are less obvious and more natural, and the illusion much more complete. And besides it enters more into the detail both of passion and sentiment, and consequently has a variety of modes of affecting the feelings which

[z] See Note II. Chap. v. and Note II. Chap. vi.

[A] 'An enraged grenadier, with a sabre in his hand, is undoubtedly an object of terror and alarm; but if to make himself taller he mounts upon stilts; if in order to seem more enraged he covers his face with an illumined mask, he will then become a scare-crow, and frighten children only; his enormous strides will but serve to render him the more ridiculous to the rational spectator.' LINGUET ON VOLTAIRE'S TRAGEDIES.

[B] See Note 215 near the end. This is said only as to dramatic effect. The spectacle was undoubtedly most magnificent.

[c] See Note I. Chap. iv.

were



were denied to the ancients. ' In the drama of the Greeks we may  
 ' see indeed the strongest colors, but they are distinct, neither softened  
 ' by reflection or melted into each other; while in the modern drama  
 ' we see a thousand combinations which far from weakening the picture  
 ' only serve to render it more lively, more various, and more interesting.'

MARMONTEL.

The impression of the passions of pity [D] and terror on the mind as  
 to their strength, will be influenced like every other impression corporal

[D] How much we are influenced by particular circumstances and situations, as to affecting  
 impressions every one who consults his own feelings, or studies the feelings of others, will be soon  
 convinced. To take a very familiar instance from the popular amusement of sporting: many  
 a man who during the enthusiasm of the chase, will look on the death of a deer or a hare not  
 only with unconcern but with pleasure, would feel a real pain at seeing a lamb slaughtered  
 by a butcher, or will kill a pheasant or a partridge with his gun for his diversion, when he  
 must be strongly pressed by hunger indeed before he would strangle a fowl with his hands.  
 To those who like to judge rather by others sensations than their own, and think experiment  
 inferior to classical authority, a quotation from Xenophon and Arrian on this subject may have  
 weight. Xenophon speaking of the hare-chace says, ' This animal is so pleasing that who-  
 ' ever sees it either trailed, or found, or pursued, or taken, forgets every thing else that he  
 ' is most attached to.' To all this Arrian assents in his Treatise on Coursing except the  
 taking of the hare, which he says ' is neither a pleasing nor a striking fight, but rather dis-  
 ' gusting.' The difference of opinion in Xenophon, Arrian supposes to arise from his being  
 ignorant of the use of greyhounds. Undoubtedly the corporal sufferings of the hare are more  
 obvious to the courser than the hunter. Mr. Somerville in his Chace, where certainly it is  
 not his purpose to diminish the enthusiasm of the sport, has chosen to mention a very improper  
 circumstance, and which tends strongly to do it, in his description of the death of the hare.

——' Till round inclos'd

' By all the greedy pack, with infant screams

' She yields her breath.'

Thomson



as well as mental, both by the force of the stroke and the sensibility of the object struck. If then the moderns possess more sensibility, and at the same time their theatrical imitation not only exceeds the ancient in truth of representation, but enters more into affecting detail, it may produce that kind of illusion which shall be so strong as, on painful subjects, to produce the passions of pity and terror unallayed by the sensation of any attendant pleasure. In this case surely Aristotle would not condemn a poet for softening the pathos of the dramatic story in compliance with the feelings of his audience, since in the passage quoted from his Treatise on Government he mentions [E] pleasure as a necessary concomitant of the purgation of the passions by the imitative arts.

Here however an objection may possibly occur. Aristotle indeed tells us, that the Athenians were best pleased with the happy catastrophe ending differently to the good and the bad; or in other words, with what is or rather has been usually called **POETICAL JUSTICE**. But how shall we

Thomson not only censures hunting as a cruel diversion, but even blames the use of animal food. Angling however, he praises as a delightful amusement. Even there he feels for the worm. But he speaks with all the complacency imaginable of 'fixing with gentle twitch the barbed 'hook' in the mouth of the fish. The early instructors of youth are now very careful in preventing them from tormenting animals, and it is a very proper care; but at the same time it oftener originates from mistaken fondness than cruelty. If the fly-killing anecdote of Domitian be true, I think it rather a proof of his want of rational resources of amusement than a specimen of the natural barbarity of his disposition.

[E] Καὶ πάντες γίνεσθαι τινὰ καθάρσιν, καὶ κώφισθαι μετ' ἡδονῆς. See Note I. Chap. VI. That the primary object of poetry is to please was the opinion also of Erastosthenes, another ancient philosopher, who says, ποιητὴν πάντα σοχάζεσθαι ψυχαγωγίας οὐ διδασκαλίας. 'The poet effects all his purposes by interesting us not by instructing us.' See the beginning of the bishop of Worcester's Essay on the Idea of Universal Poetry.

account



account for what has been said in favor of the opposite conduct of the tragic drama among ourselves? The answer to this objection appears sufficiently obvious[F]. People are very apt to think they like what they ought to like. How far this decision of Aristotle might change the taste, or rather the fashion of Athens in this case, we have no opportunity of knowing; but that it has influenced, assisted by the critical decisions of Addison and others, the opinion of many of the people of London, though perhaps not their real taste, is certain. Mr. Addison and his colleagues in the composition of the *Tatlers* and *Spectators*, have been at great pains to disseminate and enforce this doctrine of Aristotle, to the entire conviction of such of his readers as chose rather to judge of their feelings from the authority of philosophers and critics than their own sensations. See *Spectator*, No. 40, and *Tatler*, No. 82. The last mentioned paper is by the later editors attributed to Steele [G], but the doctrine

[F] The father of English poetry makes no bad distinction between the decision of pedantry and nature in putting the commendation of the system of Aristotle in the mouth of the monk, and giving the other opinion to the knight and the host. See the quotation from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* by Mr. Twining, Note 100. See also Beattie on *Imagination*, Chap. v. page 202.

[G] In one of these tales which I do not quote as they are in every one's hands, we can hardly, on reflection, pity the man whose misfortune is brought on by so absurd an act as the pulling the trigger of a fire arm at a woman, even with a certainty of its being unloaded, which was not the case. A great frailty may be a proper foundation for tragic distress, but I doubt if a great folly is. As to the other story which Gay has made the groundwork of a very popular ballad, the event on which it turns is barely possible but very improbable, and therefore unfit for poetry. I have heard of an event as extraordinary, though directly opposite in the catastrophe, from an eye witness whose veracity I can depend on, which though on the same ground unfit for fable, those of my readers who think as I do on the subject will forgive me for relating. My friend was at one of the small bathing towns on the southern coast of England, I believe Teignmouth, when the Royal George was lost at Spithead. He was in the street when the account came. A poor woman  
in



doctrine as to poetical justice, and the weakness of the audience, is exactly correspondent with that of Addison in the Spectator, and this doctrine is supported by the introduction of two as shocking tales as a gloomy imagination ever invented, or the accidental occurrence of distressful incidents actually occasioned. In this country, however, the authority of a dictator even in matters of taste will never be admitted, an appeal lies to the people, and their decree has reversed this dictatorial edict. [H] The tragedy of King Lear has always ended with the happiness of Cordelia and the restoration of the old monarch, from the first alteration of it by Tate. Indeed Addison himself was too good a whig

in all the agony of maternal grief exclaimed, I had a son on board. A man at the instant was riding down the street. It was that son who had got leave of absence, and had left the ship the day before the accident.

In No. 117 of the Tatler, a doctrine diametrically opposite is held. 'Inventions of this kind (ending happily) are the food and exercise of a good-natured disposition, which they please and gratify at the same time that they nourish and strengthen.' This paper the later editors attribute to Addison, but the internal evidence is strongly in favour of its being Steele's. Particularly the story of the dream.

[H] Davies in his Dramatic Miscellanies has remarked, that King Lear in its original state was never a favorite. Mr. Colman altered Tate's alteration, preserving the happy catastrophe, but rejecting the love scenes between Edgar and Cordelia. The reason given by Tate for this love episode is quite a la Française, viz. the want of heroism in Edgar to take such a mode of saving his life for his own sake only. However the idea that Cordelia gives those harsh answers to her father to avoid a disagreeable marriage, reconciles us to a conduct otherwise a little inconsistent with so gentle a character; but on the other hand it deprives Albany, who is drawn as a perfectly just man, of the only excuse he can have for arming against his own conviction.

' Where I could not be honest,  
' I never yet was valiant : for this business,  
' It touches us as France invades our land.'

M m

not



not to lay aside his assumed authority, and bow to the majesty of the people, and flatter their prevailing taste even in violation of ancient manners by wedding a Roman virgin to a barbarian king, and of Roman history by dismissing to happiness and quiet a young patriot, who expired soon afterwards with his country's freedom in the plains of Philippi, for the sake of giving a happy catastrophe to his celebrated tragedy. I say a happy catastrophe, for as to the character of Cato, as it is drawn by Addison, we are neither interested in his life or concerned for his death.

To argue from my own feelings, that arrangement of dramatic fable is at the same time the most affecting, and the most pleasing in which those characters in whose welfare we are strongly interested, after experiencing the greatest distress, and while their utter ruin or death seems inevitable, are at once relieved by a sudden revolution of fortune quite unexpected and yet not improbable [1]; and the pleasure received from this will be greatly increased if the distress of the fable arises from tyranny and oppression [κ], the author of which is involved in ruin by the peripetia. Such an arrangement will both excite pity and terror, and the catastrophe will be still agreeable to our feelings. This form is exemplified in the *Wife for a Month* of Beaumont and Fletcher, the *Marriage A-la-Mode* of Dryden, the *Grecian*

[1] The difficulty of doing this, I believe, has occasioned more poets to follow the opposite plan than the precept of Aristotle; for as Dryden observes in his preface to the *Spanish Friar*, 'It is not so easy a business to make a tragedy end happily; for 'tis more difficult to save than 'tis to kill. The dagger and the cup of poison are always in readiness; but to bring the action to the last extremity, and then by probable means to recover all, will require the art and judgment of a writer, and cost him many a pang in the performance.'

[κ] This is even approved by Aristotle. See Note VI. Chap. XVIII.

Daughter,



Daughter, and above all in the fourth act of *The Merchant of Venice*. At the moment Shylock is preparing to execute his bloody purpose, the interposition of Portia,

• Tarry a little—there is something else,  
and the terror and disappointment of the Jew, has been already mentioned as affording the most striking theatrical situation that can be conceived. Perhaps the subsequent effect is something hurt by the raillery of Gratiano, the force of which should be kept down as much as possible in the performance, instead of being highly exaggerated as it usually is. We have seen indeed the character of Portia given to a comic actress, and the gravest and most spirited parts of this scene made the vehicles of mimicry. In this Mrs. Clive was followed by Miss Macklin and others. Miss Young, now Mrs. Pope, had the honor of restoring Portia to her proper dignity. The fate of Sir Giles Overreach in *Maffinger's New Way to Pay Old Debts*, would be a masterpiece of this sort were it not for the circumstance [L] of his daughter being a party in the scheme to betray him, and the lord degrading his character as a nobleman, and still more as a soldier, by taking a principal part in the deception.

Though the peripetia, or sudden revolution of fortune, when arising even from accident is allowable in the tragedy with a happy catastrophe, as in the *Wife for a Month* of Beaumont and Fletcher, yet I think in the tragedy of the other form the unhappy catastrophe should be a necessary or probable consequence of the circumstances of the fable. Undeserved

[L] From a circumstance of the same kind, though not immediately connected with the catastrophe, Shylock moves more of our compassion than perhaps the poet intended; though this is greatly counteracted by the scene where his imprecations against his daughter's disobedience are alternately interrupted by his vows of vengeance against Antonio.



misery, purely accidental, will always displease in the representation. Our sense of moral fitness is hurt by it; we are apt to say [M] such things ought not to be. When such things happen in real life our first sentiments take that turn, and we can only reconcile them with our notions of a just and merciful Providence, by looking beyond this life; but we are not likely to make reflections of that kind at the theatre; the dramatic illusion is momentary; the instant we reason about it it vanishes. The distress in *Romeo and Juliet* arises only from the Friar's coming a few minutes too late to the monument; and in Garrick's [N] alteration, by Romeo's drinking the poison a few moments too soon. The catastrophe of *King Lear* and of *Douglas* are both derived from accident. Tate has altered the first by making the messenger arrive only an instant sooner in the prison; in the original he comes time enough to save the king. The other may be altered, and I believe has been on a private theatre, by making Douglas turn a moment sooner on *Glenalvon*. Tragedies of this sort do not require the great art and judgment mentioned by Dryden to change the catastrophe, but it can very seldom be done when the catastrophe arises inevitably from the incidents; as in the *Œdipus* of Sophocles, and in *Coriolanus*, *Othello*, *Timon of Athens*, *Venice Preserved*, and the *Fair Penitent*.

[O] Dr. Beattie blames the punishment of Lovelace in *Clarissa* as not being the immediate consequence of his wickedness, but of some infe-

[M] *Elements of Criticism*, Vol. II. page 379.

[N] By Garrick's judicious alteration the pathos is greatly increased. At the same time that I express a general opinion that the unhappy catastrophe ought not to arise from accident, I do not mean to say that when such an arrangement is adopted the merit of the poet does not increase in proportion as the power of affecting is made more forcible.

[O] *Essay on Fable and Romance*, page 569.

rriority



riority to his antagonist in the use of the small sword. But though the wisdom of the age has abolished the trial by combat from our courts, it still makes a part of the jurisprudence of fable whether epic or dramatic [P]. On the stage we are pleased to see Richard fall by the hand of Richmond, and Macbeth yield to Macduff, though from the characters of the combatants, it is most probable that the decision of a duel would in reality have been the reverse.

[P] We must nevertheless allow, that when either the epopee or the drama chuse to punish a character they have drawn superlatively vicious with death, they ought not to distinguish his final conduct with any particular strokes of heroism. The ingenious author of *Zeluco* has erred in this respect when we consider what a fiend he is made. I think Thomson saw this clearly from the answer he makes Cassandra give to the vaunt of *Ægisthus*, in his tragedy of *Agamemnon*.

‘ÆGISTHUS. We this important day

‘Will or with conquest crown, or bravely die.

‘CASSANDRA. No, tyrant, no! the gods refuse thee that:

‘Not like the brave, but like the trembling coward,

‘Th’ affaffinating coward, shalt thou die.’

M. Lessing, in speaking of the German tragedy of Richard the Third, makes a similar observation. (For the character of Richard, as drawn by the German poet, see Note IV. on this chapter.) ‘After so many crimes which we have been compelled to witness, we hear that he has fallen in the field of battle. When the queen’ (his sister-in-law, I presume,) is informed of it, and the poet makes her say, “This is something,” I have never been able at the representation to refrain from saying to myself, “No! it’s nothing.” ‘More than one virtuous monarch has fallen in defending his crown against a powerful rebel. Richard dies indeed, but he dies like a hero; dies on the bed of honor: and can such a death recompense me for the pain I have felt during all the piece from seeing the triumph of successful villainy?’ *DRAMATURGIE*, Part II. page 36. It was given only to Shakespear to paint the character of Richard as a cruel and successful tyrant without causing him to awaken our disgust, and to make his death at the same time honorable and supremely dreadful, by means of preceding machinery.

NOTE



## NOTE VIII.

THE SATISFACTION ATTAINED BY THESE MEANS IS NOT THAT WHICH SHOULD PROPERLY BE EXPECTED FROM TRAGEDY, BUT RATHER WHAT BELONGS TO COMEDY. FOR THERE, THOUGH THE CHARACTERS ACCORDING TO THE FABLE ARE AS IMPLACABLE ENEMIES AS ORESTES AND ÆGISTHUS, THEY MUST GO OUT RECONCILED AT THE END OF THE PLAY, AND NO PERSON MUST BE KILLED BY ANOTHER.

I PERFECTLY agree with Mr. Twining in his idea concerning the allusion to comedy. Nothing can be more natural than for Aristotle, after having blamed the happy catastrophe arising from the punishment of vice, and the reward of virtue, and saying that such an arrangement wanted the tragic requisites of pity and terror, and partook rather of the nature of comedy, to add, that comedy was indeed so averse to objects of pity and terror that it could hardly admit the punishment of vice ; the scene must, on no account, be stained with blood ; guilt must be reclaimed not punished ; and enemies reconciled, even though the event violates the known facts on which the fable is founded.

The notion that the death of some of the persons is an essential characteristic of tragedy, has I believe prevailed on the modern theatre ; and some of those dramas which take a higher tone than is usual with comedy, without including any fatal accident, have been announced to the public under the general name of plays. In common conversation we never apply tragic to any event, however distressful, that is not attended by some fatal consequence.

From



From the mention of Orestes and Ægisthus, one might be tempted to think that comedy sometimes interfered, as to her subjects, with the province of tragedy. But I conceive it is only meant as a strong example to illustrate the predilection of comedy for the universal happiness of the catastrophe.

The reconciliation of enemies is seldom a subject of the drama, but that of friends who have quarrelled has been a favorite scene, which succeeding poets have copied from each other. The archetype of this was given by Euripides, in the scene between Agamemnon and Menelaus, in the *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Our Shakespear exhibited a masterly trait of the same kind in the interview between Brutus and Cassius. Beaumont and Fletcher copied him in the dialogue between Melanthus and Amyntor in the *Maid's Tragedy*; and Dryden imitated the same situation twice, viz. in the scenes between Troilus and Hector, and Dorax and Sebastian. To these may be added the scene between Horatio and Altamont, in the *Fair Penitent*; and the reconciliation of Lord and Lady Townly in the *Provoked Husband*. Defects are not so generally imitated. At least we may be sure that what is so often found in the compositions of those whose chief business it is to please the public, must be found capable of producing that end. Of the dramatic effect of all but the two last I cannot judge, but in reading they affect my own feelings in a higher degree than any other dramatic circumstance whatever; and the last scene of the *Provoked Husband* always draws as many tears from the eyes of the audience as the strongest efforts of the tragic muse, though assisted by the powers of Mrs. Siddons.



## C H A P. XIV.

## NOTE I.

THOSE WHO PRODUCE WHAT IS MONSTROUS INSTEAD OF WHAT IS TERRIBLE, BY THE REPRESENTATION, HAVE NONE OF THE PROPERTIES OF TRAGEDY.

THE word used by Aristotle here (*τεράτωνδες*) I conceive to apply in this case to any thing wonderful and supernatural, or as Metastasio renders it, 'il monstuoso ed il portentoso.' [A] The critic has first mentioned two modes of producing pity and terror; by the apparatus of the theatre, and by the construction of the fable. Yet he not only gives the decided preference to the last, but he even goes so far as to say it is in fact the only mode that can fairly be esteemed the work of the poet, as being capable of producing the proper end of tragedy without the assistance of theatrical representation; while that which depends on the apparatus is almost independent of the poet, and depends chiefly for its effect on the [B] person who furnishes and arranges the decoration of the spectacle.

[A] See Mr. Twining's note on this passage, note ci, in which there is much judicious criticism.

[B] The Choragus which I have rendered 'manager of the theatre' to make it more obvious to the English reader, was the person who furnished the chorus, the actors, the dresses, &c. at his own expence. This mode of bribing the poorer citizens by the rich, was as popular at Athens as feasting them is in Britain. The same method was followed by the Roman demagogues towards the close of the republic, though generally by the means of a more barbarous



spectacle. But he now proceeds to shew, that the very small share the poet could claim of this effect is entirely lost, when the monstrous is exhibited, merely as such, and unconnected with the terrible, since the trifling powers he does possess in this method of exciting the passions, viz. the pointing out to the person who regulates the apparatus, the objects on which he is to exercise his art, are applied to a purpose not at all connected with the proposed end of tragic imitation [c].

What was the power of the ancient theatrical apparatus to produce terror, we can only learn from history. We are told indeed, though perhaps from no very good authority, that in the *Eumenides* of Æschylus so many furies in horrid forms were brought on the stage, that children were thrown into fits, and pregnant women miscarried. Whatever may be the authority from which we receive this anecdote, it seems by no means improbable. We know the effect that scenes of this kind have over weak minds at the present hour. No one has I believe ever censured the behaviour of Partridge at the theatre, as contrary to nature; and a person who will really feel themselves ill by the supposed influence of animal magnetism, may certainly be strongly affected by theatrical horror. We may also allow, that the decoration of the Athenian stage with its masks and its buskins, was as superior to our own in representing these wonderful and supernatural appearances, as I must think it was inferior in imitating the truth and nature of real life.

barous exhibition than the drama; this being afterwards adopted by the emperors on a larger and more expensive scale, had no small share in reconciling the people to the loss of their influence in the administration of the government.

[c] The reader who wishes to see an application of this to the modern pantomime, and a very humorous examination of that species of the drama by the rules of Aristotle, is referred to Mr. Twining, note c1.



The preternatural beings of Shakespear have been praised so often and by so many critics who stand high in the literary world, that it might seem superfluous to say any thing on the subject, did I not consider it as the duty of a writer, professing to illustrate the Poetic of Aristotle by modern examples, not to pass over the poet whose excellence in this respect is unrivalled, and is of a different cast from any thing of the kind in the Grecian drama, and that in a circumstance which I do not recollect to have ever seen noticed.

In the production of supernatural beings by the Greek tragedians, both from the pieces themselves and the judgement of Aristotle, it appears the terror was produced chiefly, if not entirely by the apparatus. We find none of that solemn language which we at once feel, [D] though we hardly know why to be so strictly characteristic of the shadowy speaker. This is so independent of, and so superior to the art of the Choragus, that no theatrical decoration is capable of heightening its effect. What representation can give us such ideas of the ghost of Hamlet as we received from the terrible and pathetic dialogue between that awful phantom and his son. Perhaps the effect is stronger in the closet than on the stage. This is certainly the case with Macbeth. The witches with their high-crowned hats and broomsticks, might be objects of terror, in the reign of a monarch who wrote a treatise on their art, against which sanguinary laws were not only in existence but put into frequent and severe execution; but to us they are merely objects of ridicule, as having no hold either on our belief, or the faintest traces of

[D] The cause of this is examined and investigated as far as it is capable of investigation, by the author of the Essay on the dramatic Character of Falstaff, page 71.



our recollection of such belief; and we are at full leisure to laugh at the grotesque figures of the masculine and bearded women.

The Bishop of Worcester in his Letters on Chivalry, mentions the superior horror of the gothic to the ancient superstition, and how much more we are affected by the ghosts and witches of Shakespear, than by the Lemures of antiquity. The fact as to the ghosts, at least with regard to ourselves is indisputable, and I think the reason of it is sufficiently obvious. The fictions of ancient mythology are only matters of amusement to us; but the gothic superstitions have, to most of us, been at one part of our lives the objects of our belief and our terror. For parental care has seldom been able entirely to guard our infancy from the impressions of the nursery.

M. Lessing, in his criticism on the Semiramis of Voltaire, introduces so just a comparison between the machinery of Shakespear and Voltaire, that I shall make no apology for inserting it though it is of some length. 'Is it never permitted now to admit a ghost on the scene? Is this source of the terrible, of the pitiable entirely exhausted? By no means; that would be too great a loss to the poetic art. Cannot we produce many instances where genius confounds all our philosophy by rendering things terrible to the imagination, which to the cool reason would appear perfectly ridiculous? We must reason differently then; perhaps the first principle we argue from is not well-founded. "We believe no longer in apparitions." Who has said this? Or rather, what does it mean when it is said? Does it signify that we are so far enlightened as to be able to demonstrate their impossibility? Are those incontestable truths which contradict the idea of such prodigies so universally spread, are they always so much in the minds of the people,



‘ that every thing that is repugnant to them must necessarily appear  
 ‘ ridiculous and absurd? That can never be the sense of the phrase.  
 ‘ “We believe no longer in apparitions,” then can only mean this. On  
 ‘ a subject on which different opinions may be supported, and which  
 ‘ never has been and never can be decided, the prevailing opinion of the  
 ‘ day occasions the balance to preponderate on the negative side: many  
 ‘ individuals are convinced that there are no apparitions, a great many  
 ‘ more pretend to be convinced, and these harangue on the subject and  
 ‘ give and support the fashionable doctrine. But the multitude are  
 ‘ silent, they are indifferent on the subject, they sometimes take one side  
 ‘ and sometimes the other, they laugh at ghosts in broad day-light, and  
 ‘ listen with trembling avidity at night to the terrible stories that are  
 ‘ told of them [E].

‘ The disbelief of spectres in this sense neither can nor ought to pre-  
 ‘ vent the use of them in dramatic poetry. We have all in us at least  
 ‘ the seeds of this belief, and they will be found most in the minds of  
 ‘ the people for whom the [F] poet principally composes. It depends  
 ‘ on his art to make them vegetate, and on his address, in the rapidity of  
 ‘ the moment to give force to the arguments in favor of the reality of  
 ‘ these phantoms. If he succeeds, we may be at liberty in common  
 ‘ life to believe as we please, but at the theatre he will be the arbiter of  
 ‘ our faith.

[E] I am too well convinced of the accuracy of M. Lessing's knowledge of human nature to doubt the truth of this account of German credulity. It would have better suited this country half a century ago than at present. But, even now, there are more people who will feel the truth of it than will own it, even in England.

[F] Especially the dramatic poet. It is said of Moliere that he used to read all his comedies to an old female servant, and generally found her decisions confirmed by the public.

‘ Shakespear



‘ Shakespear knew this art, and he is almost the only one who ever  
 ‘ did know it. At the appearance of his ghost, in Hamlet, the hair  
 ‘ stands an end, whether it covers the brain of incredulity or supersti-  
 ‘ tion. M. Voltaire was much in the wrong to appeal to this ghost,  
 ‘ which makes both him and his apparition of Ninus ridiculous. The  
 ‘ ghost of Shakespear really comes from the other world, at least it ap-  
 ‘ pears so to our feelings: for it arrives in the solemn hour, in the dead  
 ‘ silence of midnight, accompanied by all those gloomy and mysterious  
 ‘ accessory ideas with which our nurses have taught us to expect the  
 ‘ appearance of spectres; while that of Voltaire’s is not fit even to ter-  
 ‘ rify a child. It is merely an actor who neither says or does any thing  
 ‘ to persuade us he is what he pretends to be: on the contrary, all the  
 ‘ circumstances with which it appears, destroy the illusion and betray the  
 ‘ hand of a cold poet who wishes indeed to deceive and terrify us, but  
 ‘ does not know how to go about it. It is in the middle of the day [G],  
 ‘ in the middle of an assembly of the states of the empire, and preceded  
 ‘ by a peal of thunder, that the spirit of Ninus makes its appearance from  
 ‘ the tomb. From whence did Voltaire learn that apparitions were so  
 ‘ bold? What old woman could not have told him that apparitions  
 ‘ were afraid of the light of the sun, and were not fond of visiting large

[G] Shakespear knew the consequence of adapting his scenery to his action, in exciting ter-  
 ror by natural as well as supernatural agents.

‘ The sun is in the heaven; and the proud day,

‘ Attended with the pleasures of the world,

‘ Is all too wanton and too full of gawds

‘ To give me audience:—if the midnight bell

‘ Did with his iron tongue and brazen mouth,

‘ Sound one unto the drowzy race of night:

‘ If this same were a church-yard where we stand,—

K. JOHN.

‘ assemblies?



‘ assemblies? Voltaire was undoubtedly acquainted with all this; but  
‘ he was too cautious, too delicate, to make use of such trifling cir-  
‘ cumstances. He was desirous indeed of shewing us a ghost, but he  
‘ was determined it should be one of French extraction, decent, and  
‘ noble. This decency spoiled the whole. A spectre, who takes liber-  
‘ ties contrary to all custom, law, and established order of ghosts, does  
‘ not seem to me a genuine spectre; and in this case, every thing that  
‘ does not strengthen the illusion tends to destroy it.

‘ If Voltaire had examined with care, he would have felt the incon-  
‘ veniency, which on another account must attend the bringing a phan-  
‘ tom before so many people. On its appearance, all the persons of the  
‘ assembly (that is to say, all the actors who were representing the  
‘ council of the queen and the states) ought to shew in their counte-  
‘ nances all the terror that the situation required; each ought even to  
‘ shew it differently from the rest to avoid the cold uniformity of a ballet.  
‘ How could such a troop of stupid assistants be trained to this exercise?  
‘ And when it had succeeded as well as possible, would not this variety  
‘ of expression of the same sentiment have divided the attention of the  
‘ spectators, and necessarily have drawn it from the principal characters?  
‘ That these may make a strong impression on us, it is not only necessary  
‘ that we should see them, but it is also proper that we should see no-  
‘ thing else.

‘ In Shakespear, it is only with Hamlet that the ghost converses. In  
‘ the scene where the mother is present, the spectre is neither seen or  
‘ heard by her. All our attention then is fixed on him alone; and the  
‘ more we discover in him the signs of a soul distracted by terror and  
‘ surprize, the more cause we have to think the apparition which occa-  
‘ sions



‘ fions fuch agitations, as real as he feems to believe it. The [H] ghofl  
 ‘ operates more on us through him, than itfelf. The impreffion that it  
 ‘ makes on him paffes into our minds, and the effect is too fenfible and  
 ‘ too ftrong for us to doubt of an extraordinary caufe. Of this fecret,  
 ‘ Voltaire knew little. It is precifely becaufe his fpectre tries to  
 ‘ terrify many people, that it produces little terror in any one. Semi-  
 ‘ ramis cries out once only, “ O, heaven, I die !” and the other affift-  
 ‘ ants are very little more affected by the fhade of Ninus, than they  
 ‘ would be by the unexpected appearance of a friend, whom they be-  
 ‘ lieved to be at a diftance.

‘ I obferve alfo another difference between the French and English  
 ‘ fpectre. The firft is only a poetical machine folely employed to [I]  
 ‘ unravel the plot; we take no intereft in him. On the contrary, the

[H] Fielding makes Partridge account for his fear in the fame manner. ‘ Not that it was  
 ‘ the ghofl that furprized me neither: for I fhould have known that to have been only a man  
 ‘ in a ftrange drefs: but when I faw the little man fo frightened himfelf it was that which took  
 ‘ hold of me.’ TOM JONES, Book XVI. Chap. v.

[I] This intention however is exprefsly difavowed by Voltaire; and what is rather surpriz-  
 ing, in a paragraph in which he quotes, with approbation, the celebrated rule of Horace,

‘ Nec deus interfit nifi dignus vindice nodus.’

‘ I would have (he fays) thefe bold attempts never employed, except when they ferve at the  
 ‘ fame time to add to the intrigue and the terror of the piece; and I would wifh by all means  
 ‘ that the intervention of thefe fupernatural beings fhould not appear abfolutely neceffary. I  
 ‘ will explain myfelf: if the plot of a tragic poem is fo involved in difficulty, that the poet can  
 ‘ only free himfelf from the embaraffment by the aid of a prodigy, the fpectator will perceive  
 ‘ the diftrefs of the author and the weaknefs of the refource.’ DISSERTATION ON TRAGEDY  
 PREFIXED TO SEMIRAMIS.

‘ other



‘other is really an efficient person of the drama, in whose fate we are interested; he excites not only terror, but compassion also.’

‘This has probably arisen from the different manner in which these two authors have considered the general notion of apparitions. Voltaire has regarded the appearance of a dead person as a miracle, and Shakespear as a natural event. Which of the two thought most as a philosopher is a question that we have nothing at all to do with; but the Englishman thought most as a poet.’ DRAMATURGIE, Part I. page 39, et seq.

After all, though there is great truth in much that is here advanced, I do not think an English audience would now endure a ghost from a modern hand, however well executed. That we have still belief in apparitions sufficient for dramatic effect, is obvious from the reception of Shakespear’s Ghosts. But we require that the poet should have rather a stronger credulity. This is illustrated by the comparison between the faith of Shakespear and Voltaire in the concluding paragraph of the quotation. Every modern poet must be in the predicament of the latter. There is very nearly the same distinction between the machinery of Homer [κ] and Virgil.

An instance perhaps of the marvellous pushed too far, may be drawn from Dryden’s *Œdipus*. I have read somewhere, that on the revival of that tragedy, the audience were disgusted with the variety of prodigies, and the ghost of Laius with his numerous attendants. Brumoy, (Vol. I. page 393) speaking of Seneca’s *Œdipus*, says, ‘Creon makes a more

[κ] See note 1, chap. xxiv.



‘than infernal description of the prodigies he had seen.’ And Dryden in the preface to his tragedy, prides himself for bringing that before the audience which Seneca had only described. Perhaps he chose here to enter the lists with Shakespear. It would have been more conducive to his reputation, if he had recollected his own words in the prologue to his *Tempest*, where he tried to imitate and add to the machinery of a play, which was in every respect inimitable.

‘But Shakespear’s magic could not copied be;

‘Within that circle none durst walk but he.’

We have lately seen an attempt of the same kind by a person of the highest eminence in a sister art, whose recent loss is justly an object of national concern. I mean the fiend at the head of the dying Cardinal in the celebrated picture of Sir Joshua Reynolds, in the Shakespear gallery.

## NOTE II.

IT NOT BEING ALLOWABLE TO ALTER ESSENTIALLY STORIES THAT HAVE BEEN GENERALLY RECEIVED, BUT, FOR EXAMPLE, CLYTEMNESTRA MUST BE KILLED BY ORESTES, AND ERIPHYLE BY ALCMÆON; IT IS THE DUTY OF THE POET TO FIND OUT SUCH TRADITIONAL STORIES, AND EMPLOY THEM SKILFULLY.

TO explain clearly my notion of the spirit of this precept, it will be necessary to give some degree of paraphrase. The critic has decided on what incidents, and between what persons, the force of the passions of pity and terror should be founded. But he then adds, that it not being

O o

allowable



allowable for the poet to alter the essential circumstances of known stories, he ought to seek out for such historical events as furnish those tragical incidents; and having found them, to employ and arrange the circumstances in such a manner, as to give them the greatest force on the feelings of the audience.

There are three opinions on the meaning of the phrase in the original, *Αὐτὸν δὲ εὐρίσκειν δεῖ. καὶ τοῖς παραδεδομένοις χρῆσθαι καλῶς*. The most general is, that it directs the poet to invent new fables himself, like the [L] Anthos of Agathon, and arrange the circumstances of traditional stories properly; another is, that the poet should find out new historical subjects; and the third, that he should find out new stories, making a proper use of fables already received, which is that adopted by Dacier, but seems to me wrong as to the last part of the sentence.

In my former edition I had followed the first interpretation. But the [M] arguments of Mr. Twining, to which I refer the critical reader, are so convincing in favor of the second, though he has admitted the first into the text of his translation, that I have followed him without hesitation. This argument seems confirmed also by what Aristotle says in the last chapter, and repeats again in this, of the scarcity of proper dramatic subjects. On which account, it may justly be considered as the duty of the poet to seek diligently for fables which afford such incidents. I cannot however agree with Mr. Twining, in thinking that *εὐρίσκειν* is obviously opposed to *τοῖς παραδεδομένοις χρῆσθαι*. If that were the case, I should be still inclined to adhere to the first translation; but I think it

[L] See chap. ix.

[M] See his note civ.



cannot be justified without altering the conjunction *καί*, which, taking in the sense of the whole passage, seems to connect and not distinguish the [N] finding of the fable, and the employment of its circumstances when found.

Among all the editors and commentators who have written on Shakespear's Hamlet, and who have traced its source in an old novel, founded on an event recorded by Saxo Grammaticus, I am surprized that no one has noticed the striking resemblance between Hamlet and Orestes. But though this has not been remarked by his countrymen, it has not escaped the observation of a French critic. It appears from a letter of the Abbé Le Blanc, to the French dramatic poet Crebillon [o], that the Abbé Prevot has written a comparison between the tragedies of Electra and Hamlet, in which 'he commends the English poet because wiser than 'Sophocles, he forbids young Hamlet, by the apparition of the ghost, 'to attempt any thing against his mother's life.' And Le Blanc himself was so much struck with the resemblance as to say, he is 'inclined to 'think the likeness between the tragedy of Hamlet, and the Greek one 'of Electra, is not the mere effect of chance, but that we may easily 'discover the person of Orestes in Hamlet, which Shakespear has ac-

[N] The English translators of Aristotle and other Greek writers, have frequently been drawn into error by the Latin word for *εὐρίσχω*. *INVENIO*. of which the English word, *INVENT*, though its derivative, is by no means the proper translation. *Ποιέω* signifies to invent in the sense which is here supposed, and is universally used for it in this work, and its proper Latin translation is *FINGO*. But though Aristotle's precepts here, as well as the examples with which he illustrates them are drawn from received fables, they apply equally to those which are the pure invention of the poet.

[o] See Letters on the English and French Nations, Let. LIX.



'commodated to his own manner of writing.' There certainly are more circumstances of co-incidence between the stories of Hamlet and Orestes, than can well be resolved into accident. As the monarch being killed by a brother in one, a cousin german in the other, who possesses his wife and usurps his throne; the son robbed of his right, his life treacherously attempted, and himself urged to vengeance by supernatural means; the friendship of Hamlet for Horatio, and Orestes for Pylades, both of whom by the way are cyphers in the action, and even the madness of Hamlet when joined with the other circumstances. And here I must remark, that the advantage of Shakespear over Sophocles, allowed by the French critic, arose from the former not being fettered by this precept of Aristotle; and being at liberty to free his chief character from the horrid crime of matricide, without altering an essential incident of a well-known history.

## NOTE III.

I WILL EXPLAIN MORE CLEARLY WHAT I MEAN BY SKILFULLY.

THOUGH Aristotle is here laying down rules for giving the best arrangement to those leading circumstances in received or traditional stories, which the poet is not allowed to alter, it is observable, that of all the examples he gives, the story of Alcmaeon and Eriphyle is the only one in which the manner of the event, as well as the event itself, is not according to received opinion. Medea is always supposed to destroy her children knowingly, and the incest and parricide of Œdipus to be involuntary, and so of the rest.

NOTE



## NOTE IV.

AND THERE IS NO OTHER METHOD EXCEPT THESE, FOR A PERSON MUST EITHER ACT, OR NOT ACT, AND MUST EITHER KNOW, OR BE IGNORANT OF, THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ACTION.

OF these methods, according to the opinion of Aristotle, at least as delivered in this chapter, the following is the order in point of merit, beginning according to his usual custom with the lowest degree.

First, for the character to meditate some atrocious crime, perfectly acquainted with its consequence and the relation which the object of it bears to him, and to desist from the perpetration of it from a change of sentiment. The example Aristotle brings of this is the intention of Hæmon to kill his father in the *Antigone* of Sophocles. The *Love Triumphant* of Dryden furnishes a modern instance. The catastrophe of *As You Like It*, depends on the usurper changing his purpose.

Secondly, for a character in the same predicament to execute the purpose. Medea is the example of Aristotle. We may produce *Othello* and *Macbeth*.

Thirdly, for a character to perform some terrible action ignorant of the consequence, and the relation of the object, and to make the discovery afterwards ; of this *Œdipus* and the *Orphan* are examples.

Fourthly,



Fourthly, for a character, in the same circumstance with the last, to discover the consequence and the relation before the purpose is executed. Of this Merope will serve both for an ancient and modern example. Dryden's *Conquest of Granada* furnishes another.

Discovery of persons is not so often the hinge on which the modern drama turns, as discovery of innocence or other circumstances. In which case the first and last species will be often blended. [P] *Othello* will be removed from the second to the third class, which will also comprehend *Zara* [Q].

Having stated these different forms, it remains to examine how far Aristotle appears right as to the respective rank in which he classes them according to their comparative excellence, and particularly to enquire how far he is justified in the severe sentence he passes on the first; and how the preference he appears to give the last can be reconciled with the opinion he delivers as to tragedy, in the preceding chapter. In doing this, I shall endeavour as much as I am able, to keep the observations on the respective forms separate. Though from the necessity of comparing them with each other, it will be impossible sometimes to avoid blending them.

In regard to the first arrangement; its only difference from the second arises from the want of the pathos, the actual suffering of some person,

[P] For want of a circumstance of this sort the fable of *Medea* is infinitely more shocking, and less interesting than that of *Othello*. The discovery of *Iago's* villainy, and *Desdemona's* innocence, are affecting in the highest degree.

[Q] When the first and second species have no discovery whatever, they will of course remain as-classed by Aristotle.

which



which Aristotle thinks so necessary for tragedy; and the decision of Aristotle in this place, makes his preference of such tragedies as *Merope* still more wonderful; since this mode has exactly the same difference from the second that the fourth has from the third; for the improbability of the change of sentiment, on which something might be said, is not what Aristotle censures, but the want of [R] effect, because no person suffers.

In the tragedy of *Macbeth*, the first and second modes are mixed. *Macbeth* and his wife are both acquainted with their relation to *Duncan*, by the joint ties of blood, of gratitude, of allegiance, and of hospitality. The former executes the act, while *Lady Macbeth* on the point of doing it desists, because as she says, he 'resembled her father as he slept.' This stroke has been frequently admired, as marking the natural tenderness and sympathy of the female sex in action, even when capable of urging another to the most atrocious deeds of cruelty.

[s] *Metafasio* approves this first arrangement as giving the strongest powers of marking and concluding the struggle between the various contending suggestions of love, of reason, of manners, and of despair, by an act of suicide; and he draws his example from the same source with Aristotle, the *Antigone* of *Sophocles*. If *Hæmon*, worked up to the highest degree of frenzy, by the struggle between conjugal love and

[R] Ου τραγικόν, ἀπαθὲς γὰρ.

[s] *ESTRATTO DELLA POETICA*, page 272. The reader who wishes to compare this with *Metafasio*, will observe, that he enumerates the forms according to their merit, while I have followed the order of Aristotle.

parental



parental cruelty, on the point [r] of plunging his sword into the bosom of his father, had turned it against his own; he observes, and justly, that in such an arrangement the passions of pity and terror would be strongly excited, and the indispensable [v] Aristotelian pathos, the perturbation arising from the sight of wounds, and death, still preserved. But this production of pity and terror, arising from a struggle between remorse and passion as to the commission of an atrocious crime, and terminating in the resolution of committing it, whether such resolution is actually carried into execution or not, is branded by Aristotle with the epithet of [x] disgusting.

Corneille is of a different opinion from Aristotle as to this. He allows indeed the theatrical effect which attends the discovery incident to the third and fourth modes, and especially the fourth, to be particularly striking; and that the incident in Merope (of which I shall speak more at large presently) is the most affecting that can be imagined. But he adds, ‘all this beauty is confined to the single moment of the discovery; that is to say, the end of the drama [y]; throughout the whole course of which the principal character remains in the same situation of

[r] I do not recollect such an incident in any regular modern drama; but there is something like it in an anomalous dramatic poem of Lord Lansdowne’s, called the British Enchanters, where Constantius in despair, catches his favored rival by the throat, and is on the point of stabbing him, till recollecting the distress it will bring on his mistress, he exclaims,

‘But for Oriana’s sake ’tis better here,’

and instantly kills himself.

[v] ‘Patos Aristotelico.’

[x] *μισαρόν*.

[y] Which by the way is not the case in the modern tragedies of Merope.

‘wishing



' wishing to kill a person neither connected by friendship or con-  
 ' guinity. A situation not tragical, according to Aristotle himself. From  
 ' whence the poet can find no opportunity of agitating the passions. But  
 ' on the contrary in the other case, (that of Medea) where an atrocious  
 ' deed is knowingly purposed and executed; the continual agitation of  
 ' the principal character always fluctuating between love and rage, be-  
 ' tween the desire of vengeance and the horror of the deed, will not be  
 ' confined to the catastrophe but will pervade the whole tragedy. Since  
 ' the causes which lead by degrees to the conception of so horrid a de-  
 ' sign, the repugnancy of natural affection, the passions of rage and  
 ' tenderness that must alternately prevail, will furnish the poet with  
 ' ample materials for shewing his principal character in situations always  
 ' new, always violent, and always perplexing, till the last impulse that  
 ' finally fixes his resolution.'

It is impossible to avoid seeing the truth and justice of these remarks.  
 Why then should Aristotle call this arrangement disgusting? Perhaps  
 we may trace the cause in the nature of the ancient theatre, which, rather  
 calculated to represent [z] action than passion, was ill qualified for the  
 exhibition of this struggle between those contending sensations, which  
 could not, in cases of extreme guilt especially, be opened at large in the  
 presence of a chorus [A], and therefore the criminal intent appears to the  
 audience in all its horrors, without any alleviating circumstance.

[z] See Note VII, Chap. XIII.

[A] In the Medea of Euripides, the chorus argue strongly with her on her unnatural de-  
 sign. The struggle in her own bosom is drawn in much fainter colors; and her fixed resolu-  
 tion in so horrid a design is well calculated to excite the disgust mentioned by Aristotle.



In this point, that is in the continuation of the interest arising from contending and contradictory passions, the first and second modes exactly agree. It remains to examine the catastrophe in which they differ. The prevention of the perpetration of a horrid crime by suicide, as proposed by Metastasio [B], would certainly have a good theatrical effect, but it does not exactly come under the censure that Aristotle gives to the catastrophe occasioned by the change of mind only, without any positive action, and therefore is not an answer to it. When in the course of the struggle, reason alone preponderates against passion, and the character desists from acting, merely from reflection, the conflict will either not appear to be carried to the highest pitch, or the change of purpose will seem to want a sufficient cause [C]; for if it happens from any extraneous cause whatever, apparently adequate to work such a change, it will have all the effect of a discovery, and the species will be changed from the first to the fourth.

[B] Racine has managed this matter in a very extraordinary mode in his tragedy of the Thebaide. Creon and his son are rivals for the affections of Antigone. Hæmon is killed in trying to separate Eteocles and Polynices, who, as is well known, fell each by the other's sword in single combat; and Creon finding his rivals, both in love and ambition, removed by the death of his son and his kinsmen, offers his hand and his throne to Antigone, who chose rather to sacrifice her life to the memory of her lover and her brothers. On which Creon, after having called on heaven to destroy him with a thunder bolt, faints away in the arms of his guards; reminding us a little of Kitty's speech in *THE WHAT D'YE CALL IT*.

‘Lead me to bed and there I’ll moan and weep,

‘And close these weary eyes in death—or sleep.’

[C] It must be acknowledged that the story of Coriolanus, which is certainly a very good one for a tragedy, depends on a change of resolution; and the same may be said of Dryden's *Love Triumphant*, on the catastrophe of which he prided himself, and which is really a good one. But in both these cases, the change of resolution is occasioned by conclusive reasoning and earnest resolution: the combat is violent, and the victory gradual.

‘A French



‘ A French poet, M. de Longe Pierre, has chosen to give this arrangement to the story of Medea, whom he has represented on the very point of murdering her infants; but at the instant she is going to sacrifice them to her vengeance, her tenderness revives, the dagger falls from her hands, she is not able to perpetrate the crime she had meditated, which occasioned a surprise as lively as it was unexpected.’ I have quoted this from the work of an anonymous French writer, entitled *PRINCIPES POUR LA LECTURE DES POÈTES*. If the French poet has taken this liberty with the fable of Medea, and transferred it from the second species to the first, an eminent writer of our own has chosen to give the fable of *Œdipus*, or at least the most disgusting, if not the most tragic part of it, with heightened circumstances and another name, the form of an intentional perpetration. I mean the printed, though unpublished tragedy, of the *MYSTERIOUS MOTHER*. If as Aristotle, and after him Horace assert, the poet to affect others must put himself into the situation of his character, one would wonder how such a work could be [D] the production of the elegant and humane author to whom it is ascribed. I cannot however here avoid the mention of one of the finest possible dramatic effects that it contains; which though a natural event, has all the force and the appearance of a ma-

[D] One of the reasons given by Plato in his *Republic*, l. III. for banishing the poets from his commonwealth is, because from putting themselves often in the situations of vicious men, whose sentiments they want to express, they will in time be apt to acquire those manners which they are so often in the habit of imitating. I believe this observation is more ingenious than true. Nothing is more common than to see the poetical and natural character of the same person perfectly at variance with each other. The gloomy genius of Young’s muse was not confined to his *Night Thoughts*, it is strongly to be traced through all his tragedies; and yet he is said to have been a very cheerful man, and to have actually been the first to set on foot an assembly at Welwyn, in Hertfordshire, where he resided.



chine. I mean when the priest is opening to his colleague his horrid scheme, and his determination to persist in it, the sudden interruption by a voice from within crying, 'Forbear!' which strikes even such a character with horror, till the repetition of it shews both him and the spectators, that it is only the first word of a choral hymn, sung behind the scenes.

As the first and second modes are exactly alike in the course of the fable, so are the third and fourth, and only distinguished by the catastrophe. The principal observations therefore as to the comparative merit of these forms must relate to the catastrophe, which will necessarily involve in them those circumstances in which they agree.

The first thing that strikes us here is the seeming contradiction in the opinion of the critic, who apparently gives the preference, and that in a very strong expression, to that catastrophe which seems only to differ from the other in terminating in happiness instead of distress. His opinion on that point has not only been decidedly given in the preceding chapter, but even in this; for he does not blame the catastrophe in the first form because it is brought about by improbable means, but because it is not tragical.

Many have been the labors of critics, and translators, to clear up this point, and reconcile the opposite doctrines. But I own I think none of them satisfactory. Some of these I shall state which appear the most plausible, at the same time mentioning my own objections to them. But while I confess this general dissatisfaction, as to all that the searches of others, or my own reason can suggest on this subject, my opinion is inclined to that of M. Lessing, though I do not entirely subscribe to his



his solution of the difficulty. That ingenious and candid critic, after mentioning a fellow-countryman, Mr. Curtius, who declares it to be his idea that Aristotle has not treated this article with his usual exactness, proceeds thus: 'I own this does not appear probable to me. A writer like Aristotle is scarcely liable to such flagrant contradiction; when therefore I find the appearance of it in the works of such a man, I distrust my own judgment rather than his. I redouble my attention; I read the passage ten times; and I am not able to persuade myself he can have contradicted what he has formerly asserted till after I have examined, through all the combination of his system, how and on what account he could be drawn into that contradiction; and if I do not find any thing that gave rise to it, and which must in some measure have rendered it inevitable, I am convinced it is only apparent, for otherwise it must have occurred to Aristotle, who had so often examined his matter with more attention than I can possibly have done, who enter newly on the subject and chuse him for my guide [E].'

Just as this reasoning is in general, it is not however absolutely conclusive, and especially the last sentence. Though a man must know his own meaning better than another; it does not follow that he shall have formed a regular chain of causes and consequences in a [F] hasty sketch, which I conceive this piece to be, and not a finished work. Or even if it was, who has ever yet formed a composition in which it is impossible for criticism to find a single inaccuracy? On this ground we may suppose, (I hazard it merely as a conjecture,) that the philosopher who has mentioned the [G] intent to kill as equivalent to the actual execution of that intent, in examining the subject farther, and being inquisitive after

[E] Dramaturgie, Part I. page 178.

[F] See preface.

[G] \*Η ἀποκτείνῃ ἢ μέλλῃ.

truth,



truth, and not supporting an hypothesis, without considering exactly what he had said before, might be led to remark, that if the tragic effect was carried to the greatest height, and the distressful catastrophe seemed inevitable, it was better to avoid the commission of a deed too [H] shocking for representation, even through ignorance of the relation, though the consequence should be, a catastrophe accompanied by a change from misery to happiness. This in fact, had the treatise been complete, might have been so explained as to have been no contradiction to his former decision; for it by no means follows that what is in general preferable must absolutely and invariably be so in every case, and under all possible circumstances [1].

M. Batteux tries to vindicate Aristotle on the supposition that he does not mean the best manner in general, but the best of these four modes; forgetting that he has said there are no other modes except these four, and that he is pointing out the best way of conducting properly a tragic fable.

Dacier takes up partly the same idea, that Aristotle is not speaking of fable in general, but only giving directions how to manage atrocious

[H] *τι τῶν ἀνηκέστων.*

[1] See Mr. Twining's note 106, who defends Aristotle exactly on this principle, supposing him to say, 'When the circumstances of the traditional story from which the poet takes his plot, are such as leave him only the alternative either of disgusting and shocking the spectator, or of gratifying his wishes, the latter is clearly to be preferred, and the διπλὴ σύστασις to which I assigned the second place, will in that particular case deserve the first.' But is not this idea both of Mr. Twining and myself rather a justification of Aristotle's supposed opinion in this place than a reconciliation of it with his former decision, since he is certainly speaking of the general construction of tragic fable, and not of particular exceptions?

actions



actions properly, without changing the essential part of the fable. When, for instance, the murder of Clytemnestra by Orestes is fixed on for the subject of a tragedy, we should examine which arrangement would suit it best. The first will not suit it as being too atrocious and essentially altering the story; the second, (which is the real fact by the way, and which the three [κ] Greek tragic poets that remain to us have adopted) will be too horrible; the fourth would entirely destroy the received fable; therefore the third only remains. But would not the fable be equally destroyed by this; and is it not an essential part of the story that Orestes does not kill his mother by accident, but to revenge his father's death? It is true such an alteration is said to be made in the tragedy of Eriphyle, but as we have no circumstantial account of that story, or do not know with what variation it may have been related, or have any remains of the tragedy, we can only say that it does not seem to fall exactly under the same predicament with the story of Orestes and Clytemnestra, which is recorded by Homer [L] as well as the three principal ornaments of the Grecian tragic drama. It would however have been on this account a much better example for Dacier to have chosen.

M. Lessing, immediately after the passage I have quoted from him, undertakes the defence of Aristotle on another ground. He argues that the affecting part of the tragedy arising from peripetia and discovery are distinct things from the catastrophe; and that they often happen prior to it: as, for instance, in the fourth act of the *Œdipus*: as also in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* of Euripides, and the very tragedy he is criticising,

[κ] In the *Choephoroi* of *Æschylus*, and the *Electra* of Euripides and Sophocles.

[L] Homer does indeed mention Eriphyle, but in a very cursory manner.



the Merope of Voltaire and Maffei. M. Lessing then adds, ' That it  
 ' is easy to shew in the subject of Merope itself, how perfectly it is  
 ' possible in the same fable to combine the most tragical [M] peripetia.  
 ' with the most tragical pathos. We find indeed the last, but what  
 ' hinders us also from having the first? Suppose, for example, after  
 ' having discovered her son before she killed him, she had occasioned  
 ' afterwards either his death, or her own, by her zeal to protect him  
 ' against Polyphontes. Why might not this piece terminate as well by  
 ' the death of the mother as of the tyrant? Why might not the poet  
 ' be permitted to carry our pity for a most affectionate mother to the  
 ' highest degree, and then make her perish through that very affection,  
 ' or to cause the son to fall by the artifice of the tyrant after having  
 ' escaped the vengeance of his mother? Would not such a Merope unite  
 ' in effect the two properties of the best form of tragedy which the  
 ' critics have found so contradictory?' As to the former part of the  
 question the answer is obvious. That the discovery of the son in Me-  
 rope, and the brother in Iphigenia in Tauris comprehends peripetia as well  
 as pathos there cannot be a doubt. And a poet may, if he pleases, intro-  
 duce two or ten peripetias in the course of his drama, alternately counteract-  
 ing the effect of each other. But that after giving a very strong and pathetic  
 peripetia tending to happiness, the addition of a distressful catastrophe  
 would unite two beauties supposed to be incompatible, is so far from the  
 case that it must destroy the effect of both. It is indeed an arrange-

[M] It is a bold step to render *κράτιστος*, by most tragical. In the use of this word, as in  
 many others, the figurative sense is more familiar than the direct one; most tragical is not  
 synonymous with best fitted for tragedy. Were I to say the pathos of Merope is more  
 according to the proper rule of tragedy than *Œdipus*, but the catastrophe is not so tragical, I  
 think the distinct meaning of each would be clearly understood, however improper it might  
 be to oppose them to each other in the same sentence.

ment



ment of fable that I believe no poet has ever yet attempted, and which I believe, if it were attempted, no audience would endure.

As to the new catastrophe proposed for Merope, (which if Euripides had chosen it for his Cresphontes would have been directly in opposition to the rule of Aristotle, as to deviating from received fables,) it is exactly that of Douglas, who absolutely perishes from his mother's too earnest anxiety for his preservation; but there is no previous happy peripetia. Lady Randolph's finding a son she imagined had perished when an infant by accident is nothing like the circumstance in Merope. As for the discovery and peripetia in [N] the *Œdipus* so long before the catastrophe, it has all the weight that an error in a great writer ought to have in justifying succeeding poets for copying his blemishes, if they are not able to imitate his excellencies. It must be remembered [O] also that Aristotle recommends that species of tragedy where the peripetia and discovery are united, and that he expressly says the discovery is a transition from ignorance to knowledge, producing either friendship or hatred, in the characters as they are designed for happiness or misery; that is, in other words, occasioning the catastrophe. In the *Iphigenia in Tauris* indeed, the difficulty and distress continue after the discovery as they do in the modern tragedies of Merope. Of the *Helle* we know nothing. But I cannot be persuaded that the scene in Merope of Euripides, the effect of which is so highly spoken of, could be in any other place than the catastrophe.

M. Lessing is very severe on Voltaire for his misrepresentation of Aristotle in his epistle to Maffei, wherein he asserts that the philosopher

[N] See Note I. Chap. VII.

[O] See Poetic, Chap. XI.



‘ does not scruple to call the recognition of Merope and her son the  
 ‘ most interesting moment of the Greek scene.’ Here Voltaire has un-  
 doubtedly been guilty of a mistake, either wilfully or accidentally.  
 Aristotle says no such thing. But that it was highly interesting indeed,  
 we have the authority of Plutarch, who must have been a better judge  
 than any modern can possibly be. ‘ Behold,’ he says, ‘ Merope in the  
 ‘ tragedy, lifting the axe over her son as supposing him the murderer of  
 ‘ that son, and saying,

“ This arm to thee a juster wound shall give.”

‘ What a confusion it occasions among the audience, who start up  
 ‘ through terror and anxiety, lest she should anticipate the arrival of the  
 ‘ old man and strike the youth [P].’ Such was exactly what I felt the  
 first time I saw the representation of King Lear, the alteration of which  
 I had never previously read.

Why Maffei and Voltaire, who were at liberty to have acted as they  
 pleased in this respect, chose to insert this interesting scene in the middle  
 of the piece rather than in the catastrophe, I cannot determine. It  
 could not be from any difficulty in arranging the mode. It appears from  
 Plutarch that Merope is going to destroy her son with an axe, and with  
 an axe of sacrifice Voltaire makes the tyrant fall at the altar; the two  
 events therefore of the discovery of the young man and the death of  
 Polyphontes, might have happened almost at the same moment. Perhaps  
 the choice of the plan they adopted was influenced by a desire of imi-  
 tating the arrangement of Aristotle’s other example, the Iphigenia in  
 Tauris. But without applying to authority our own feelings will con-

[P] Plutarch Περὶ Σαφροφ.



vince us the effect of the two scenes must be very different in point of interest. We can never be affected in the same manner by a virgin priestess, who is in the habit of sacrificing innocent strangers to Diana, and a mother frantic to revenge the death of a beloved son on his supposed murderer.

Perhaps we may impute this to another cause, the difficulty of keeping up through five acts, an interest in a situation so little affecting as the wish to kill a supposed criminal, neither connected by friendship or blood. But the poet might have supplied this, and made the agitation of the spectator compensate for the deficiency of it in the character, by informing him of the real connection of Merope and the young man, which must obviously have been the case in the Greek tragedy mentioned by Plutarch. It is true when the discovery is made at the same time to the spectator and the character, the impression on the feelings is greatly increased; but the effect of such a discovery is weakened after the first representation [Q].

The discovery of Ion in a tragedy of Euripides, imitated by Mr. Whitehead in his *Creusa*, seems to me in the original, the most perfectly affecting and surprising of any extant, either ancient or modern. To use the words of the Jesuit Poree, which I cite from Mr. Maçon's *Life of Whitehead*, prefixed to the third volume of his works. 'In spite of all the faults either real or apparent that may be found in this piece, nothing can be conceived more perfectly theatrical than the representation of a mother on the point of killing her unknown son, and at the same time of dying unknown by his hands, when at the

[Q] See *Dramaturgie*, Part. I. p. and Note vi. Chap. xvi. and Note II. Chap. xi.



‘same time this double project of parricide serves to restore the son to his mother and the mother to her son.’ Perfectly agreeing as I do with Mr. Mason in applauding the great skill of the English poet in the general improvement he has made of this tragedy in his *Creusa*, I must with him wish he had not deviated so much from Euripides in the catastrophe, to which I suppose he was induced by a desire to adhere to the precept of Aristotle laid down in the last chapter, and to render more tragical that poet whom he had declared the most tragical of the Greek dramatic writers.

On examining this passage and the context with attention, we may possibly find at last that every attempt to reconcile Aristotle with his own reasoning even here, is perfectly impossible, supposing him really to give the preference to the last arrangement. It will be in vain to excuse such a preference on any partial ground, such as that though it might not be the best general form, it may become so in certain instances, or in some particular parts of the drama. Since he declares it not to be so when compared with the other forms, on those very principles from which he decides on their merit; and that not in a different part of the work but in this identical place. The first form he totally rejects because disgusting from the atrocious design, and yet not productive of tragic effect as no one suffers. Why he gives the preference over this to the next he does not mention, but the reason is clear, for though he censures it on account of the disgust arising from the atrociousness of the design, it has yet the tragic effect he requires. The third species he tells us in express terms is free from the disgust occasioned by a wilful criminal intent, and besides this will have the interest arising from an unexpected discovery, which is an advantage the other two do not possess. But besides this advantage over the other two it will possess the



the tragic effect of the second. The last mode will possess the radical advantage of avoiding the criminal intent, and the adventitious one of the unexpected discovery. But it will be deficient in the radical advantage of producing tragic effect from personal suffering, which he is here insisting on, and in which the third mode is not deficient; and therefore Aristotle cannot give the preference to the fourth mode without forsaking the very ground on which he is absolutely then arguing.

But let us go a little back. When Aristotle first explains what he means by a skilful arrangement of the fable he names only two modes. The most obvious one, and what was generally practised by the older writers, was the simple perpetration of some great crime, not indeed through radical depravity but through passion, knowing the situation of the persons who were the objects of it; like the Medea of Euripides. To this however has been discovered an improvement which will obviate any disgust arising from the intentional crime, by making the character ignorant of the connexion of the person who is the object of his vengeance with himself. He now recollects a third mode besides, but which seems to be only suggested by his mention of the other two, as that which he absolutely condemns appears to be brought to his mind by the enumeration of the four only possible forms which arises from the casual recollection of this.

If these observations are right how shall we justify the approbation that Aristotle gives to the last mode? But has he given such approbation? It will be a little singular if after the censure M. Lessing has bestowed on Voltaire with no niggardly hand, for the hyperbolical eulogium he bestows on this scene in Merope, that the pen of the French poet,



poet [R], like the random pencil of Apelles, should have at once done what so much skill and pains had been in vain employed to do, and that he should have given, though with some exaggeration indeed, the true meaning of Aristotle, which at once solves every difficulty, and restores the consistency of his theatrical doctrine.

Let us consider the force of the word *κράτιστος*, and its situation here. The primary sense of this word, as given by all the lexicographers, as confirmed by a thousand passages from ancient writers, and in conformity to its derivation, is [s] MOST POWERFUL. Why the commentators and translators have universally chosen to give it here the general sense of BEST I can see no cause but from its immediately following *βέλτιον*, the very reason as I should conceive that would have made against that sense of the word. For I believe it is very unusual in comparison of adjectives to mention one word in the positive, another in the comparative, and another in the superlative degree, yet all in the same sense. Stephens in his Lexicon, on the word *κράτιστος*, after giving many instances of its signifying MOST STRONG and MOST POWERFUL, adds, 'that it is sometimes more conveniently rendered by BEST, even in some of the places that he has cited.' The same thing may certainly be said of MOST STRONG or MOST POWERFUL, in our own language, or of FORTISSIMUS or VALIDISSIMUS, or VIRIBUS PRÆSTANS, in Latin; but I do not think they could well be considered as the proper superlative of BETTER or MELIOR. Were I to say such a thing is better than another, but a third has the strongest effect, the superlative strongest

[R] I imagine Voltaire was no Greek scholar.

[s] I have in this edition of my translation ventured to translate it, 'having the most powerful effect.'



must be taken generally as far as that particular quality goes, and not as the superlative of better; though if strength of effect were the quality on which the merit of the subject depended, it would certainly imply it. The same will hold in Latin. 'Melius est ignarum fecisse, factumque agnovisse, fortissimum vero, postremum.' Could there be in this case any reason for supposing FORTISSIMUM could possibly be considered as the superlative of MELIUS?

It seems very natural for Aristotle, after having mentioned the two modes he most approved as having the proper pathos in the catastrophe, and given the preference to the latter as avoiding a fault incident to the former, the wilful perseverance in an atrocious crime, knowing it to be so, and possessing besides a striking discovery, to reflect on the instant that one of the forms he had been condemning possessed this last in a more extraordinary manner, as being capable of producing the strongest dramatic effect possible, which is by no means an hyperbolical translation of *κράτιστος*, supposing it to be applied in this manner. Surely then there is no inconsistency in relating a fact, however it may make against his own hypothesis, and that it must have been a fact is obvious. Aristotle in the last chapter shews the great predilection of an Athenian audience for the happy catastrophe: and Plutarch bears a strong testimony to the effect of the scene between Merope and her son; and our own feelings will justify this. There is also another reason besides the gratification of our feelings why the happy discovery and peripetia must be more striking than the unhappy one. The reverse of fortune must be foreseen, or at least suspected in the tragedy ending in distress, or the body of the drama must be deficient both in incident and interest: but the more the tragedy of the other form is filled with distress, the more imminent and inevitable



inevitable the fatal conclusion appears; the stronger will the tragic effect be throughout the course of the drama, and the force of the peripetia and discovery more violent in proportion as they are unexpected and sudden; and they cannot be too much so if they do not exceed the bounds of probability. I do not recollect any tragedy ending unhappily in which the peripetia is not either misery added to former suffering, or the accomplishment of the expectation of it; as in the *Œdipus*, the *Fatal Marriage*, and *Douglas*. I have already mentioned the effect of the scene in *Tate's King Lear*. Shakespear tried to create a peripetia of an opposite kind, by raising our expectation of both Cordelia and Lear's safety through the interference of the dying Edmund. Perhaps this example may give a full explanation of Aristotle's use of *καταρσις*. We will suppose him reasoning on the alteration of Shakespear's *Lear* with all his prejudice in favour of the unhappy catastrophe. 'I will allow,' he might say, 'that Tate, though an inferior poet, has by a small and probable change introduced a most striking and affecting situation; we are at once anxious for the event, and delighted with its accomplishment; it is the strongest, the most violent stroke of theatrical effect I know; I do not hesitate to say it is the most interesting moment of the English stage; but it is not tragic; it does not possess that pathos, those means of exciting pity and terror, which are the proper objects of the tragic drama. We do not expect from tragedy the pleasure arising from surprize, and affecting situation, which are momentary, but to have our passions excited, and at the same time softened by continual and lasting impressions of terror and distress; and every sort of pleasure is not to be expected from tragedy, but only that which is proper and peculiar to itself.'

Perhaps



Perhaps the reader, who recollects what I have said on this subject in [r] another place, may think I am defending Aristotle's consistency at the expence of my own. But he will observe I am delivering what I think would be his opinion, and not mine.

I must acknowledge that I owe the first hint of this solution to the [u] Cambridge edition of the Poetic, Mr. Cooke having rendered *Κράτιστον*, 'Quod maximè valet.' And he has the following note on the passage. 'What, is that the best form of action which he mentions last, and is the structure of the fable in Cresphontes to be preferred to *Œdipus*? Can Aristotle dissent so much from himself? Or rather do the interpreters of Aristotle dissent so much both from him and from truth? Let them recollect that third form, which he connects with the preceding ones by these words *ἐτι δὲ*, as if doubting whether he should mention them at all, as unfit for tragedy though adapted to the popular taste. For such is the force of this word *Κράτιστον. ὁ κρᾶτεῖ ὁ νικᾷ*, HAS THE VOGUE. For the vulgar indeed applaud that structure of fable for the causes already given. The action of Cresphontes, con-

[r] See Note VII. Chap. XIII.

[u] In the same volume Mr. Cooke has given a very elegant and classical Greek version of Gray's Elegy. I will however take the liberty of pointing out one fault. The first line,

'The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,'

is rendered

*Νυξ πέλει, ἔδ' ἀν' ἀγρῶς πυρὰ καίεται ἔδ' ἀνὰ κώμας.*

Now though this extinction of fire is said to have been the etymology of Curfew, it is by no means the consequence of it now, or is the idea at all intended to be conveyed either by Gray, or by Milton in the *Il Penseroso*, but merely the sound of the evening bell. See Chap. xx. Note IV.



cerning which Plutarch has handed down a pleasant fable, is destitute of all tragic force because it wants pathos.

I have ventured to give *Κράτιστον* a much stronger meaning. Indeed I do not recollect such a use of the word as Mr. Cooke suggests; but if I did I should prefer the other, as I think Aristotle must have allowed the discovery in Cresphontes to be forcible, as well as fashionable; neither would he, nor does he, treat the opinion of an Athenian audience as the sentiments of the vulgar. Nor can I see why an illustration of a moral effect, in a grave treatise by Plutarch, drawn most probably from a very familiar, and certainly a very natural example, should be considered as a pleasant fable only.



## C H A P. XV.

## NOTE I.

IN FORMING THE MANNERS FOUR THINGS ARE TO BE ATTENDED TO.

THE FIRST AND MOST ESSENTIAL IS, THAT THEY SHOULD BE GOOD.

BEFORE I enter on the particular passage which is the more immediate subject of this note, I cannot avoid remarking the superiority of the dramatic writer, from which we may draw our examples, to any that the author of the Poetic could have recourse to. In regard to fable, as Shakespear was seldom an original inventor, so he was not scrupulously nice in his choice; and as to his arrangement of those subjects which he took for the ground-work of his dramas so as to produce the best tragic effect, his most sanguine admirers must allow that he has seldom studied it much in the general conduct of the fable, though he has frequently done it in particular parts; and wherever he has done it, he is, as in every other respect, inimitable.

But in painting manners, he stands alone and unrivaled: to use the words of the author of the essay on the dramatic character of Sir John Falstaff, 'The reader must be sensible of something in the composition of Shakespear's characters, which renders them essentially different



‘from those drawn by other writers. The characters of every drama must indeed be grouped; but in the groups of other poets, the parts which are not seen do not in fact exist. But there is a certain roundness and integrity in the forms of Shakespear, which give them an independence as well as a relation, inasmuch that we often meet with passages which, though perfectly felt, cannot be sufficiently explained in words, without unfolding the whole character of the speaker.’ See NOTE ON THE ESSAY, page 58, of which I have only quoted a small part, the whole note is well worth the perusal of every admirer of Shakespear, as placing his superiority in the delineation of manners in the clearest light. Indeed, to recommend that original and convincing piece of criticism partially is doing it injustice, since every part of it is replete with elegance of taste and accurate and impartial judgement.

In regard to the [A] Analysis of the character of Falstaff; though I first took the book up on the recommendation of a friend, it was with the strongest prejudice against what I thought an indefensible paradox; yet every word led to conviction; and I laid it down with the firmest assurance, that the author was perfectly in the right. I have since recommended the perusal of it to several of my friends, who have all opened it with the same prejudice, and shut it with the same conviction. That the perusal of the book will not be equally convincing to all I can easily believe. For, to use the words of the author (page 108), ‘How many sorts of men are there whom no evidence can persuade! How many, who ignorant of Shakespear, or forgetful of the text, may as well read heathen Greek or the laws of the land as this unfortunate commentary! How many who, proud and pedantic, hate all novelty and damn it

[A] See Note I. Chap. VII.

‘ without



‘without mercy under one compendious word [B] paradox! How many more who, not deriving their opinions from the sovereignty of reason, hold at the will of some superior lord, to whom accident or inclination has attached them, and who, true to their vassalage, are resolute not to surrender, without express permission, their base and ill-gotten possessions.’

We have another writer also, Henry Fielding, who in his comic epopees, is a most accurate delineator of manners. However there is one distinction between him and Shakespear, which, though perhaps it gives his pictures a more striking effect, renders them not equal in real merit to those of our great dramatic poet. Shakespear paints for all ages and all countries; while the portraits of Fielding are generally drawn from local and national circumstances [C].

[B] The author of the Dramatic Miscellany seems to have been a critic of this description. He says he cannot think the author serious in his hypothesis. One of the proofs (and he says it is unquestionable) is Falstaff giving an additional wound to Percy. I confess I think with the author of the Essay, it is rather indecent than cowardly.

[C] Dr. Johnson says, ‘There is all the difference in the world between the characters of Fielding and those of Richardson. Characters of manners are very entertaining; but they are to be understood, by a more superficial observer, than characters of nature, where a man must dive into the recesses of the human heart.’ BOSWELL’S LIFE OF JOHNSON, Vol. I. p. 299. This I think would be a very just distinction between the manners of Fielding and Shakespear, but I cannot allow it between Fielding and Richardson. His characters can never be drawn naturally which are drawn contrary to his own intention. Richardson certainly meant Clarissa for a perfect character. And yet Dr. Johnson says of her in another place, that ‘there always appears something in her conduct that she prefers to truth;’ and he adds, ‘that Fielding’s Amelia is the most perfect heroine of a novel.’ MRS. PIOZZI’S LETTERS. IN BOSWELL’S LIFE, Vol. I. p. 342, Johnson says he read Amelia through without stopping.



To return to the particular object of the note. The meaning of the word *good*, as the first essential of tragic manners, has been a cause of much difference of opinion among the translators and commentators of the *Poetic*. If we consider *χρησά* here in its usual and obvious sense of morally good, the passage is neither reconcilable with Aristotle's definition of the proper tragic character in chap. XIII, nor with the practice of all the serious epic and dramatic writers, ancient and modern. To still greater impropriety shall we be driven, if we take up the opinion, originally I believe started by Bossu, and since followed by Dacier, Harris, and Metastasio; that Aristotle by *χρησά* meant manners well marked. So strongly expressed, as to shew clearly what the character is, whether good or bad. For such a quality, so far from being distinguished from the other three requisites, is essential to them all. Since, whether a character is to be drawn good, or proper, or like, or uniform, it certainly ought to be well drawn, and strongly marked. In short, this is removing the epithet from the character of the manners represented, to that of the mode of representing them, and is nearly equivalent with a person who in laying down rules for composing a good poem, should begin with saying, that the first and most essential rule was, that the poem should be good.

But I think Aristotle has sufficiently explained his meaning in several parts of this treatise, and especially in the beginning of the second chapter [D], where he points out the difference as to manners of the objects of tragic and comic imitation; the first of which only he is now treating of particularly. The same idea is, I conceive, kept up with regard to tragic action; viz. that it should be important, in the sixth

[D] See Note 1. Chap. II.



chapter [E], and in the thirteenth as to character again, when we are told that illustrious men, like *Œdipus* and *Thyestes*, or even [F] better characters in preference to worse are the proper objects of tragedy.

Accordingly we find this rule universally adhered to in all serious fables whatever. *Macbeth* and *Richard the Third*, though they are objects of our detestation, never excite our contempt [G]; they have a dignity, a superiority of character which commands our respect, while their crimes are objects of our abhorrence. In this respect *Milton* is beyond all praise in his character of *Satan* [H]. Though I by no means put him in general on a footing with *Shakespear* as a painter of manners, yet in this single instance he certainly goes beyond him, since he had a difficulty to encounter, which must have been pronounced insurmountable if he had not surmounted it. He was to represent a being not the creature of his own imagination, but marked by the most sacred authority as the abstract of wickedness and impiety, in such colors as to be a proper, and yet principal epic character; and this he has done in so masterly a manner, that the character of *Satan* alone is to me a sufficient illustration of the meaning of *Aristotle* in this place, and the proper distinction between poetic

[E] πράξεις σπυδαίας.

[F] ἢ Βελίονος μᾶλλον ἢ χείρονος.

[G] In Chap. v. *Aristotle* in his account of comedy explains what he means by 'worse persons,' (φαιλοτέρων) not such, he says, as are perfectly depraved, but only those who possess that species of turpitude that will excite ridicule. Is it not natural, when he is speaking of that tragic goodness which he has already opposed to this comic turpitude, for him to mean not absolute goodness, but that species of it only which is proper to excite respect.

[H] See *Beattie's Illustrations on Sublimity*, page 613; and *Essay on Poetry and Music*, page 78.

and



and moral goodness ; not because the character is well marked, for that might have been as well done had he been made contemptible, and the manners of Belial and Mammon are as capable of this excellence as those of Satan ; but because he never loses our respect, nor ever appears to us  
 ‘ less than archangel ruined.’

[1] Perhaps this subject cannot be better illustrated than by a comparison between the scene in the Fatal Curiosity of Lillo, when the wife is exciting her husband to the murder of the supposed stranger ; and the scene between Macbeth and his wife. According to Mr. Harris, the manners in both are equally good poetically though not morally ; ‘ Because it is natural such a wife should persuade, and such a husband be persuaded ; and here we have all we require, because (here he blends, or rather confounds two of Aristotle’s requisites) all we require is a suitable confidence.’ To this we may add, that the intent in Macbeth is infinitely more atrocious. Wilmot, urged by extreme necessity, aggravated by the remembrance of former affluence. For,

‘ The needy man who has known better days,  
 ‘ One whom distress has spited at the world,  
 ‘ Is he, whom tempting fiends would pitch upon  
 ‘ To do such deeds, as make the prosperous man  
 ‘ Lift up his hands and wonder who could do them.’

DOUGLAS.

Wilmot, I say, resolves to reinstate his fortunes, by taking the life of a man he conceives a perfect stranger, with whom he is no otherwise connected, than by the common bands of nature and hospitality. But Macbeth, loaded with large possessions and newly acquired honors, is goaded

[1] See Note III. Chap. XIII.



by an inordinate ambition to sacrifice his kinsman, his benefactor, and his king. One who under his roof was

— In double trust,

- First as he was his kinsman and his subject,
- Both strong against the deed ; then as his host,
- Who should against the murderer shut the door,
- Not bear the knife himself.

Surely in the distinction of these two scenes the poetical GOODNESS OF CHARACTER is sufficiently marked and makes the chief difference between them : but it obviously does not arise from moral goodness, or striking delineation of character ; or if it does excel in the latter, it must be from superior merit as to one of the three last requisites, propriety, likeness, or uniformity.

In the old and middle comedy, the manners, like those in modern farce when it keeps its true character, and in the burlesque epopee, such as *Hudibras*, are represented as devoid of this poetic goodness. [κ] But in what we call genteel comedy, and the comic epopee, the manners of the principal characters at least, though drawn in general conformity to those of the age, partake of this goodness in some degree. Though *Tom Jones* is not drawn different from other men as *Achilles* is, though he is not drawn as a perfect character, and therefore as a monster, like *Grandison* and *Clarissa*, every reader will see he has no foibles that disgrace him, one only excepted, his venal amour with *Lady Bellafton*. And there *Fielding* has committed an error, and every reader feels it, against this rule which *Aristotle* has given, or rather transcribed from the volume of

[κ] See Note I. Chap. II.



nature. I have mentioned this as relative only to the principal characters. The subordinate ones may be purely burlesque even in comedy and the comic epopee.

A character can never be respectable without possessing a sense of honor and of courage. The defect of these qualities is evident in Gil Blas, who, throughout the agreeable novel of Le Sage, for so it is in spite of this defect, can never interest us; for who can be much concerned for the welfare of a despicable character, who is both a cheat and a coward; and such a character Gil Blas certainly is [L].

The Orphan is a striking instance of a want of this goodness of manners. Castalio and Polydore are certainly two unprincipled scoundrels, and Chamont is, as Castalio calls him, 'a noisy boisterous ruffian.' The Chaplain I do not mention as he is intended for a character in low comedy. But if the reader wishes to see an instance of flagrant violation, not only of goodness but every requisite of manners, he may find it in a speech of Monimia, who when Polydore, in language too gross for quotation and which would degrade him at once from the character of gentleman, had it been addressed to a common prostitute, accuses her and her sex of every vice, the last and most conspicuous of which is unbridled lust, acquiesces in the justice of the charge, and coolly replies,

' Indeed, my lord,  
' I own my sex's follies, I have 'em all;  
' And to avoid its fault must fly from you.'

[L] See Beattie on Fable and Romance, p. 570 and 572, where, speaking of Fielding's Joseph Andrews, he wonders 'what could induce the author to add to the other faults of his hero's father, Wilson, the infamy of lying and cowardice.'



The French poets so far from neglecting this rule of Aristotle, have pushed it to a most ridiculous excess, in which they have been but too much followed by many of our tragic writers. Instead of giving that natural dignity of character, which prevents even vice from becoming despicable, they have substituted an inflated and artificial character, the supposed consequence of high rank. The kings and heroes of Racine and Corneille, put us in mind of Alexander and Cæsar dressed in the hoops of the Italian opera.

This false taste is well ridiculed by [M] Lessing, in a criticism on the Earl of Effex, by Banks. After quoting several passages in which Elizabeth speaks like a woman rather than a queen [N], he proceeds, 'Yes, indeed! these things are intolerable, the refined critics, and perhaps some of my readers will say, for unluckily there are Germans yet more frenchified than the French themselves. It is for their diversion that I have selected these low passages, according to their notion. I know their mode of criticising. These little negligences which are so terribly offensive to their delicate ears, and which are so difficult for the poet to find, and who has carefully scattered them here and there, to render the dialogue more natural and give the discourse an appearance of being the real inspiration of the moment; these they tack cleverly

[M] DRAMATURGIE, Part I. page 96.

[N] 'Telephus aut Peleus cum pauper et exul uterque

'Projecit ampullas et sesquipedalia verba

'Si curat cor spectantis tetigisse querelâ.'

HOR.

'Peleus and Telephus poor banish'd! each

'Drop their big six-foot words and founding speech;

'Or else what bosom in their grief takes part.'

COLMAN.



‘ together, and then almost kill themselves with laughing at them ; and  
‘ shrugging their shoulders from mere pity, they gravely pronounce  
‘ that the poor man knows nothing of the great world ; that he has not  
‘ conversed with many queens ; that Racine knew much better, but  
‘ then Racine had lived at court.

‘ All this is very well, but it does not alter my opinion. If queens  
‘ either do not, or dare not speak in this manner, so much the worse for  
‘ them. It is not to-day I have learned, that a court is not exactly the  
‘ place where a poet should study nature. But if pomp and etiquette  
‘ transform men into machines, it is the duty of the poet to change  
‘ these machines again into men. Let real queens speak as affectedly and  
‘ politely as they please, those of the poet should speak naturally. Let  
‘ him listen attentively to the Hecuba of Euripides, and console himself  
‘ for having never conversed with other queens [o].’

From the principle above-mentioned arose all the absurd censures  
of the French critics on the simplicity of Homer, and all the misrep-  
resentations of the French translators. It is to be lamented that Pope,  
who in his notes has often treated Mad. Dacier with great asperity,  
chose to follow her example as to this in his version. The manners of  
the Iliad are altered too much ; but those of the Odyssey are entirely  
and radically changed [p].

[o] See also Beattie on Imagination, Chap. iv. page 183 ; and Brumoy's Reflections on  
Iphigenia.

[p] See this more enlarged on in Note 1, on Chap. xxiv.



## NOTE II.

A WOMAN, OR EVEN A SLAVE MAY BE DRAWN WITH THIS EXCELLENCE OF CHARACTER, THOUGH IT IS PROBABLE THAT A WOMAN SHOULD BE WORSE THAN A MAN, AND THAT A SLAVE SHOULD BE ABSOLUTELY BAD.

THIS decision of Aristotle does not appear very favourable to the ladies [Q]. Metastasio is angry with him for having thus without any necessity, insulted half the human race. But if the principles on which Metastasio explains this passage, as mentioned in the preceding note are right, there will be no insult at all. For if goodness of manners means manners strongly marked, it will be obvious to common observation that the remark is just, without recurring to Athens, where women were almost as much secluded from the general commerce of the world, in the time of Aristotle, as they are now, but even at the present time in western Europe, where they mix so much and take so active a part in society; I am speaking in general, there may be particular exceptions; but these it is not the province of poetry, at least of tragedy to imitate. A professed delineator of manners almost in our own time, has pronounced the same judgement on the sex. Pope says, and he quotes a lady as the author of the remark,

‘ Nothing so true as what you once let fall;

‘ Most women have no character at all.’

[Q] Bossu (whom Mr. Harris calls Aristotle's best interpreter) observes, ‘ As for the text, Aristotle says in his Poetic, that there are fewer good women than others, and that they do more harm than good.’ In what part of the Poetic did he find this passage?

My



My hypothesis it is true, will not afford this excuse for the Stagirite's want of gallantry. But whoever reflects on the situation of the Grecian women, must know they could not possess that goodness of character which I imagine Aristotle to mean, in an equal degree with men. For they were very little better than in a state of domestic servitude, and therefore could seldom have opportunities of exerting dignity of character. This is by no means the case with the modern female character. Their manners, indeed, are not so strongly marked as those of men, nor afford so much variety, but they are equally capable of this poetical goodness, as far as they are marked, with those of men. I do not mean such characters as Lady Macbeth and Medea, who do not properly possess female manners, but such as Juliet, as Constance, as Desdemona, and as Belvidera. As for a slave, our tragic drama knows no such character as existed under that name in the FREE republic of Athens. Zanga and Oroonoko are captive heroes.

I would not be understood however, either as wishing to palliate or apologize, for the opinion of Aristotle in this or any other place where I think him absolutely in the wrong. Of the unfavourable idea he entertained of the fair sex there can be no doubt. This is proved beyond contradiction, from a passage in his natural history [R] of animals, which Mr. Twining has quoted, and I shall venture to translate, as a compleat specimen of the purest absurdity. ‘ Woman is more apt to pity and  
 ‘ fall into tears than man. She is more given to envy, more ready to  
 ‘ find fault, fonder of scandal, and more apt to give blows. She is  
 ‘ also more addicted to anxiety and despondency, more impudent, more  
 ‘ false, more easily deceived and less apt to forget, also more wakeful,

[R] Book IX. Chap. I.



‘[s] and yet more slothful, and on the whole more obstinate than men.’

Perhaps I may be thought to take up the cause of the most amiable part of our species too warmly, when I declare this passage alone is a sufficient answer to all those, who think Aristotle never in the wrong. The philosopher is not here speaking of the civil but the natural character of woman, considered as an animal, as the female of the human race. He is enquiring into the nature of females in general throughout the whole of animated nature. These are his words. ‘Females (he says, with an exception as to tigers and bears) are less ferocious but more malicious, deceitful, and insidious than males, and more attentive in nourishing their young.—The traces of these manners are to be found, as I may say, in all animals, but they are most conspicuous in those whose manners are most marked, and especially in mankind whose nature is most perfect, so that these habits will be most conspicuous in them.’ And then follows the definition above quoted. Here therefore the ladies are marked as the representatives of the whole creation, with the flattering exception indeed of tigresses and she-bears; but certainly most of the distinctions between the sexes mentioned by Aristotle are distinctions of artificial habit, the consequences of custom and education, and not natural habit or instinct. In some of them, as timidity and softness, the ancient and modern females agree; in others, as impudence and

[s] *Ἀγρυπνότερον καὶ οὐκνήστερον*. Of this apparent paradox, Mr. Twining gives the following humorous solution. ‘More able to keep late hours, and at the same time more lazy than men,’ might not this be rendered ‘fonder of sitting up late, and lying in bed late;’ perhaps this may be the case in general at present, as the ladies are fonder of dancing, and as yet at least, though I doubt if that will continue, not quite so fond of sporting as the men.

diffimulation,



disimulation, they differ, on account of their different mode of life. But wherever male jealousy and tyranny, in modern times, reduces females to the situation of slaves, the qualities of slaves will still be found in them. Surely there is not more difference between the characters of men and women, as stated by Aristotle, than there is between a foldier and an attorney [T]. And I should hardly impute this to natural instinct. I have heard it observed, that on examining the ruins either of Pompeia or Herculaneum, the bodies of the men were found in the attitude of resistance, the women in that of resignation, which I conceive to be as much the consequence of habit as the discovery said to have been made of a young man in women's cloaths, by attempting to draw a chair in a method which his dress would not permit [U].

In a note on the former edition of my translation, I have said a more perfect character might be found among women than men. To trace the causes of this, may perhaps throw some light on the subject of the preceding note.

The qualities that raise men in the esteem of the world, that render them in the general opinion of mankind great and respectable on which poetical goodness of character depends, are often not connected, but

[T] I do not mean to say, that there are not particular instances of good or bad dispositions resisting the force of habit; there are certainly rapacious and cunning foldiers, masculine women, and honest and even liberal-minded attorneys, for I cannot agree with Mr. Shenstone, or at least am more lucky in my acquaintance with them, as I know several in whom the gentleman, the christian, and the man is NOT (as he asserts) swallowed up in the lawyer.

[U] Is not the imputation of these distinctions to natural causes something on the same principle with the remark of the old groom, who had found, from long experience, that cropped horses were naturally good?

frequently



frequently even in opposition to what may strictly be called moral virtue. That a degree of this poetical goodness is not incompatible even with atrocious crimes, has already been observed; and we may add, that in modern times it frequently depends on acknowledged vices, as a certain degree of gallantry and duelling. In regard to the first, how nearly has Fielding made Joseph Andrews an object of ridicule; and what pains is he obliged to employ to excuse him, by his violent attachment to another woman. The same may be observed as to duelling, in the character of Sir Charles Grandison, who, after all the trouble Richardson has taken to draw him perfect, is neither the object of our love or our respect. Indeed the poet's pencil is not always true to his intention [x]. I have no doubt that Rowe, in the Fair Penitent, meant to make Altamont the object of our esteem, and Lothario of our detestation. But he has so contrived in the execution, that we despise Altamont, and the gallant gay Lothario is the favorite of the spectators, though he is an unprincipled, and in one instance a despicable villain, for no crime can be more truly despicable than boasting of a woman's favors. The same may be said of two other characters in different works, Lovelace and Sir Charles Grandison. But a woman may be drawn perfectly good, and at the same time perfectly interesting, for there is no virtue in the catalogue of moral or christian duties that is not becoming, and does not both give and receive additional lustre, when possessed by that amiable sex. The utmost exertions of patience, and meekness, which at least sink the dignity of the tragic hero, raise the tragic heroine in our esteem. The characters of Imogen, of Desdemona, and of Cordelia, are as nearly patterns of

[x] Massinger has succeeded in this in his Fatal Dowry, from which Rowe entirely borrowed his plot, though without any acknowledgement. See a comparison between these plays in the Observer, No. 89, 90, 91.



perfection as human nature will admit, erring only as to that passion which we have already mentioned as furnishing [y] that *μεγάλη ἀμαρτία*, that great frailty which causes the distress of virtuous characters without awakening our disgust, or sinking them in our esteem.

Before I quit this part of the subject I must make one observation, though it partly anticipates the subject of the next note. It relates to the tendency my fair countrywomen have to violate in real life an example of Aristotle given to enforce the necessity of poetical propriety of manners. He tells us ‘there is a character of courage and fierceness adapted to men, which would be very improper in a woman.’ My own feelings on this head are so much in unison with those of the Stagistrate, that I am as much disgusted at seeing a delicate and accomplished woman drawing a bow, or managing a spirited hunter, as I should be at a man’s working a pair of ruffles, or embroidering a waistcoat. These exercises are not only unfit for female delicacy but even destructive of female beauty, as they tend to make the arm muscular, and consequently to rob it of its first grace, rotundity, and softness of outline. There is even something repugnant to our sensations in seeing a woman skilful in things that do not become her sex. In such cases there is a beauty even in awkwardness. There is a masterly stroke in Rousseau’s *Emilius* [z] exemplifying this. ‘Sophia could not sit still. She rose with vivacity. She ran over the whole shop, examined the tools, felt the smoothness of the planks, picked up the shavings, looked at our hands, and said she liked this kind of work because it was so clean. She playfully attempted even to imitate Emilius. With her white and delicate hand she run a plane over a board, the plane slid on without having any

[y] See Note IV. Chap. XIII.

[z] Vol. II. Part II.

‘effect.



‘ effect. I thought I beheld the god of love in the air laughing and  
 ‘ beating his wings. I thought I heard him shout with delight, and  
 ‘ say, “ Hercules is revenged.”

Homer who lived in more natural times than Aristotle, or the Greek tragic writers, was much more favorable to the characters of women. In what amiable colors has he drawn Helen, the cause of so much war and bloodshed. How different is the behaviour of Hector to her, and that of the pious Æneas of Virgil! Her lamentation over the body of Hector, in the last book of the Iliad, is beyond expression beautiful [A].

The case with regard to slavery was different, and Homer expresses himself on that head with nearly as much strength as Aristotle.

[B] ‘ Jove fix’d it certain that whatever day

‘ Makes man a slave, takes half his worth away.’

POPE’S ODYSSEY, l. xvii. v. 393.

[A] Madam Dacier’s criticism on this speech is the very *Bathos* of the absurd. ‘ Homer does not say this only to shew the goodness and humanity of Hector, but also to support the probability of the poem. For if Hector, who was master in Troy, both on account of his own valor and the old age of Priam, had not been in the interests of Helen, there would have been no likelihood of her not being delivered up to the Greeks in the course of so fatal a war.’

Madam Dacier in this remark omits the testimony Helen bears to the paternal tenderness shewn her by Priam.

Ἐκυρὸς δὲ, πατὴρ ὥς, ἥπιος αἰεὶ.

There is the same omission in Pope’s translation.

[B] Ἡμισυ γὰρ τ’ ἀρετῆς ἀποαίνυται εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς

Ἀνέρος εὖτ’ ἂν μιν κατὰ δόλιον ἥμαρ ἔλυσεν.

ODYSSEY, l. xvii. v. 322.



## NOTE III.

THE NEXT REQUISITE IS THEIR BEING CHARACTERISTIC.

BY characteristic is meant consonant with the profession, rank, sex, and age of the person. This is clearly defined as to the last condition by Horace in his Epistle to the Pisos [c]. The celebrated speech of Jaques in *As You Like It*, describing the seven ages of man's life, seems an imitation of this passage in Horace. But with all the veneration I have for Shakespear, I cannot agree with Mr. Colman in thinking his alteration in making two of his examples characteristic of station, instead of age, an improvement; since comparatively considered, so few men are ever either soldiers or justices. I say two examples, though Mr. Colman makes them three, enumerating the lover in them. But here I think Shakespear has adhered more to general nature than Horace. Love is certainly more naturally characteristic of youth than hunting.

An objection has been made to Iago as a deviation from this rule, as the character of an artful revengeful villain is very opposite to that of a soldier: and had Iago been the only soldier in the play the objection would have been just, as in that case he must have been considered as representing the general manners of the profession. But as in *Othello* all the principal persons of the drama are soldiers, the manners are characteristic of the individual not of the profession. From national preju-

[c] See v. 156 to v. 178 in the original, and v. 230 to v. 265 in Mr. Colman's translation.



dice we are apt to be rather unfavorable in our representation of French characters ; and had Parolles been the only Frenchman in ' All's Well ' that Ends Well,' we should not scruple to consider him as an example of such prejudice ; but as the scene lies in France chiefly, no such idea is ever entertained [D].

As to the propriety of character, the ghosts, witches, and fairies of Shakespear, are deservedly allowed superior excellence, as they certainly act in conformity with the manners, we impute to such imaginary beings did they really exist. Yet Shakespear had here some archetype to follow ; for popular opinion had already marked the outline of their habits, which was as advantageous to him in giving them characteristic manners as it was disadvantageous to [E] Milton in giving Satan poetical excellence of manners. But how Shakespear [F] has contrived in such characters as Caliban, the pure creation of his own imagination, to give to what never did, and never was supposed to exist, such manners as we are irresistibly impelled by our feelings to pronounce truly characteristic, is a power of art that criticism is as inadequate to investigate, as genius to imitate.

[D] See Bishop Warburton's Defence of Shakespear in this instance against the hyper-criticism of Rhymer.

[E] See Note 1. on this chapter.

[F] See Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff, page 75, note.



## NOTE IV.

THE THIRD ESSENTIAL IS LIKENESS. THERE IS A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THIS AND WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED ABOUT THEIR BEING GOOD AND CHARACTERISTIC.

THESE words obviously imply that though there is a distinction between them they are liable to be confounded, which is exactly the case with being like and characteristic. But there seems to be almost a direct opposition between likeness and goodness. 'For,' as is very justly remarked by Mr. Twining, 'there was more danger of a reader's thinking the ὁμοιον too different from the χρησόν, and as a general precept 'incompatible with it.' I can find no other way of solving this difficulty than by the common effort of unsuccessful and bold commentators, alteration of the text, and leaving out the word χρησόν as supposing it added by a transcriber in conformity to ὡςπερ εἰρηται, as both goodness and propriety have just been mentioned.

The difference between propriety and likeness consists merely in this, that the one relates to what is becoming and natural in a person of such an age, sex, or profession; the other, to what is appropriated to any particular character, from history or tradition. Mr. Twining illustrates this by the example of Medea, 'where the violence and fierceness which form her traditional character, and therefore the likeness of the poet's picture may be said to be proper, or suitable with respect to the individual, though improper and unsuitable to the general character of the sex.'

Mr.



Mr. Mason, as he has drawn his Elfrida, whose historical character is one of the worst in the annals of human kind, has preferred general propriety of character to individual resemblance.

This subject is discussed at large by M. Lessing, in a criticism on a comedy called SOLYMAN THE SECOND [G], taken from one of Marmontel's tales, from which I shall make a considerable extract, as it in many places applies strongly to the Elfrida of Mr. Mason, and without design, and consequently without partiality, urges what may be said on both sides as to such a delineation of an historical character.

M. Lessing first quotes the following extract from the JOURNAL ENCYCLOPEDIQUE for January, 1762, page 79.

“ Solyman,” “ say they,” “ was one of the greatest princes of his  
“ age. His victories, his talents, his virtues, rendered him an object  
“ of veneration even to the enemies he triumphed over. But this hero  
“ so sensible to glory was not insensible to love ; though delicate in his  
“ pleasures, he felt amid the corruption of a seraglio, that pleasure un-  
“ accompanied by sentiment is contemptible. He imagined he had  
“ found this in Roxelana, a young Italian captive, not perhaps inca-  
“ pable of tenderness but nevertheless artful and ambitious, and skilled  
“ in the means of making her pleasures the source of her elevation.  
“ By feigning sensibility herself, she induced Solyman who really felt it,  
“ to violate a law of the empire which forbade the sultan to marry.

[G] Dramaturgie, Part II. page 70, & seq.

We have a very pleasing after-piece on the same subject, in which the character of Roxelana has received additional interest from the powers of Mrs. Abingdon and Mrs. Jordan.

“ She



" She ascended the throne with him, an ambition in itself pardonable,  
 " if she had not employed her ascendancy over her lover to force him to  
 " sully his glory by the sacrifice of an innocent son. This woman M.  
 " Marmontel has chosen for the heroine of one of his tales. But how he  
 " has changed her ! Instead of Italian he has made her French. Instead  
 " of an artful woman affecting sensibility he has made her the coquet  
 " of a Parisian circle ; and instead of a soul overwhelmed by ambition,  
 " and capable of the boldest and most atrocious actions to satisfy it,  
 " he has given her an undefining head and an excellent heart. Are  
 " such changes allowable ? Can a poet or a novelist extend the license,  
 " whatever it may be, that is given him, to known characters ? Though  
 " permitted to change facts, has he a right to paint Lucretia as a co-  
 " quet, and Socrates as a fine gentleman ?"

To this M. Lessing replies : ' I do not chuse to charge myself with  
 ' the justification of M. Marmontel on this point. I have already ob-  
 ' served [H], that characters should be more sacred to the poet than  
 ' facts. First, because when the characters are well observed, the facts

[H] Dramaturgie, Part 1. page 57, where he defends the anachronisms as to the age of Elizabeth in Corneille's Comte de Essex, against the Criticisms of Voltaire. Corneille represents her as young when Essex is executed, which really happened near the close of her reign. Lessing says, ' If her character gives the poetic idea of that which history attributes to that queen the poet has fulfilled his duty, and we have no business to bring the work to the strict tribunal of chronology or history.' In confirmation of this doctrine we have had three tragedies on this subject on our theatre, to which the history of Elizabeth must be much better known than it can be to a French audience, which have all the same defect without its producing any ill consequence as to their reception on the stage. See Note IV. Chap. XVII.



' as being the consequence of such characters can never vary much [1],  
 ' as on the contrary the same facts may be derived from characters en-  
 ' tirely different. Secondly, because the instruction does not lie in the  
 ' facts themselves, but in the knowledge that such characters in such  
 ' circumstances do and can only produce such facts [κ]. Nevertheless  
 ' Marmontel has done just the reverse. The fact is, that there was  
 ' formerly in the seraglio an European female slave, who had art enough  
 ' to get herself declared legally married to the emperor. The character  
 ' of this slave, and that of the emperor, determine the manner in which  
 ' this fact really happened; and because there might have been many  
 ' different characters by whose means it might really have happened, it  
 ' certainly depends only on the poet, as poet, which, either of the  
 ' characters established by history, or of others, he chuses to employ,  
 ' according as the moral he has in view, requires one or the other. All  
 ' that is expected of him, in case he chuses other characters than those  
 ' which are furnished by history, or even such as absolutely contradict  
 ' it, is to abstain also from historical names, and rather ascribe known  
 ' [L] facts to unknown persons than give to known persons manners  
 ' which do not belong to them. The first encreases our knowledge, or  
 ' at least seems to encrease it, and pleases even on that account; the

[1] This I think will hardly be granted, and indeed seems confuted by the other member  
 of the sentence. As the leading facts of the story of Elfrida not only might have been, but  
 actually were nearly the same as represented by Mr. Mason, so had Elfrida been drawn as she  
 really was, undoubtedly the consequential facts might have been entirely different.

[κ] The reader will observe that part of the reasoning here arises from M. Lessing's  
 mistake as to the meaning of the Contes Moraux, or moral tales, mentioned in Note I.  
 Chap. VII.

[L] See Note IV. Chap. XVIII.



‘ second contradicts the knowledge we already have, and displeases for  
‘ that reason. We consider facts as accidental, and what may happen  
‘ in common to many different persons, but characters on the contrary  
‘ as something essential and particular. We permit the poet therefore  
‘ to arrange the first according to his fancy, provided he does not make  
‘ them contradictory to his characters. But as to the second he may  
‘ put them indeed in the best light, but he must not alter them. The  
‘ least variation seems to destroy the individuality, and give us fictitious  
‘ and deceitful persons, who usurp the names of other people, and try  
‘ to pass on us for characters they in reality are not.

‘ Notwithstanding this, it appears to me a much more pardonable  
‘ fault not to preserve in the persons those characters which history has  
‘ given them, than to err either as to probability or the moral intended  
‘ to be conveyed in such characters as are chosen at will; for the first  
‘ defect may very well be united with genius, but not the second. It  
‘ is allowed to be ignorant of a thousand things that every school-boy  
‘ knows. It is not the acquisitions of memory, but the power of  
‘ drawing from our own proper funds that constitutes riches. As to what  
‘ a poet has heard, or seen, or read, he either forgets it, or does not chuse  
‘ to know it, just as suits his purpose. He errs then sometimes through  
‘ too much security, sometimes through contempt, sometimes through  
‘ premeditated design, and sometimes not; and he does it so grossly,  
‘ and so often, that we poor souls can never wonder enough at it.  
‘ Lifting up our hands we cry, How could so great a man have been  
‘ ignorant of this? How could it have escaped his recollection? Did  
‘ not he take it into consideration? O let us be silent on the subject.  
‘ While we are trying to debase him, we only make ourselves ridiculous  
‘ in his eyes; all that we know more than him amounts solely to what  
‘ we



'we learned at school, without which we should have been completely  
'stupid and ignorant indeed.'

## NOTE V.

## THE FOURTH IS CONSISTENCY.

BY consistency is meant keeping the character uniform with itself in every respect. Without this it is impossible for the manners to excel in the other qualities; for a character can never be said to have poetical goodness, or general propriety of manners, or individual likeness, if these qualities are not uniformly kept up.

Horace seems to conceive this admonition chiefly necessary to those poets who draw original characters from their own imagination.

[M] 'Should you adventuring novelty, engage

'Some bold original to walk the stage,

'Preserve it well, continued as begun

'True to itself in every scene, and one.'

COLMAN'S HOR. EP. TO PIS. 186.

Indeed though this rule is equally essential to all characters, original ones will be most liable to offend against it. As there the poet will have nothing to guide him but his own genius, and besides he will be

[M] Si quid inexpertum scenæ committis, & audes

Personam formare novam; servetur ad imum.

Qualis ab incepto processerit et tibi constet.

EP. AD PIS. 125.



more tempted to take liberties with what he esteems particularly his property, as being the creature of his own invention. He also will esteem himself to be, and indeed actually will be, less liable to detection.

The example that Aristotle gives of failure in this point is the character of Iphigenia in the *Iphigenia in Aulis* of Euripides, of which more will be said in the next note.

Modern instances of the breach of this rule will be amply furnished by our best poets, serious and comic, epic and dramatic.

[N] The character of Hamlet cannot certainly be allowed to be uniform throughout. Besides the neglect or forgetfulness of the poet in making Hamlet, who is only supposed to affect madness, appear often really mad, (an error carefully and effectually guarded against in [O] Edgar,) there are many improprieties which I shall not enlarge upon as they are sufficiently obvious.

[N] I have been informed that by order of Mrs. Garrick the tragedy of Hamlet was thrown into Garrick's grave. I think though he was undoubtedly great in that character he was equally so in many of Shakespear's characters, and superior in Lear. The comic characters I presume were thought too light for so solemn an occasion. If by burying that tragedy with Garrick it was meant to infer that it was lost to the stage with him, a complete edition of Shakespear might, with the utmost propriety, have been interred with that inimitable actor: for what Cardinal Bembo has said of Nature on the tomb of Raffael, may be said of Shakespear on the tomb of Garrick.

[O] When one of the persons assumes a character different from his own it is the business of the actor to mark the distinction, and make the real character appear through the feigned one. Johnson has observed, 'that Garrick did not play Archer in the *Beaux Stratagem* well. The gentleman should break out through the footman, which was not the case as he did it.' BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON, Vol. II. p. 62.

Romeo



Romeo also surely acts contrary to the general tendency of his character when after the fall of [p] Paris, on being requested by his dying rival to lay his body by Juliet, he answers coolly, and rather lightly, 'In faith I will.' And on recognizing his face he considers him as an object of pity, and seems really concerned for him though his rival, and the occasion of Juliet's death.

Valentine's offer of resigning Sylvia to Protheus is a striking instance of the same impropriety in our great dramatic poet; if that play [q], which I greatly doubt, is really a production of Shakespear. Farquhar has added to this impropriety when he makes Aimwell say to Archer in the *Beaux Stratagem*, 'Take the ten thousand or the Lady;' and in Archer's brutal answer to Dorinda, when she expresses her surprize at the offer.

[p] The author of the REMARKS makes a curious observation on these lines spoken by the prince.

'And I for winking at your discords too

'Have lost a brace of kinsmen.'

His kinsmen he says are Mercutio and Benvolio, and therefore proposes to restore a line which mentions the death of the latter. This ought to be a good lesson to commentators, as it shews how they are able sometimes to see what is invisible, and to shut their eyes against what stares them in the face. Mercutio and Paris are obviously the prince's relations. Romeo on first seeing the face of Paris, calls him Mercutio's kinsman. And in the dramatic personæ, which is arranged rather according to political than poetical rank, the first character mentioned is Escalus, prince of Verona: the second Paris, kinsman to the prince.

[q] If the hand of Shakespear is to be traced in any part of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I think it is in the characters of Launce and Speed, which much resemble Lancelot in the *Merchant of Venice*.



In the song supposed to be written by Lovemore for the widow Belmour in the WAY TO KEEP HIM, and which is supposed to give his own sentiments, there is a strong instance not only of inconsistency but absolutely of opposition in this line.

‘ Turn the chief of your care from your face to your mind.’

Now the only cause of Lovemore’s indifference to his wife is her having done this very thing; and the whole tenor of the drama is to enforce the contrary conduct, and shew a woman that she ought, after marriage, to sacrifice to the graces as well as to the virtues.

There is a similar neglect in that excellent comedy the School for Scandal, when Charles Surface says to Sir Oliver on his being discovered, ‘ Believe me when I tell you, (and upon my soul I would not say it if it was not so,) if I do not feel mortified at the exposure of my follies; it is because I feel at this moment the warmest satisfaction at seeing you my liberal benefactor.’ This is quite inconsistent with the character of Charles, and would have exactly suited Joseph in the same situation, as it conveys a premeditated sentiment, and is besides obviously an untruth.

I will now produce three instances from works of narrative imitation, and those justly in the highest class of estimation. To begin with Don Quixote. In the part first published by Cervantes, and his subsequent addition in consequence of a spurious attempt by another hand, he has two distinct characters. ‘ In the first part it is true he is not drawn as an absolute maniac, when he is not discoursing of knight errantry, but all his conversation is tinged with singularity; and the pertinent things



- ‘ things he says are incoherently arranged, and themselves out of place ;
- ‘ as for instance, his long speech to the goatherds about the golden age :
- ‘ but in the second part he is made a man of sound judgment and elegant literature when the immediate subject of his madness is not
- ‘ touched upon [R].’

My next instance is from a work which is of undoubted excellence indeed, leaving every work of the same nature far behind. I mean the character of Allworthy in *Tom Jones*. He has always appeared to me a striking instance of a character at opposition with himself, though more perhaps in general with that which the author tells you in his own person he is, than with his own conduct in those parts where the author suffers him to act from himself. The author is at great pains to inform us frequently that he is, though no scholar, a man of sense and discernment, with a benevolence almost angelic ; and to press this more forcibly on our minds, he has given him a name strongly expressive of his moral goodness, though all his other characters have common names [s]. But how is he really drawn ? He is the dupe of every insinuating rascal he meets ; and a dupe not of the most amiable kind, since he is always led to acts of justice and severity. The consequence of his pliability is oftener the punishment of the innocent than the acquittal of the guilty ; and in such punishment he is severe and implacable. As in the case of Jones himself, his supposed father and mother, and black George. He suffers his adopted son and his foundling to be ill treated by an imperious pedagogue, whose

[R] See Andrews's *Anecdotes*, p. 31. Article Books.

[s] See Note III. Ch. IX.



whole character and conversation is a satire on christianity, and to have their principles corrupted by a hypocritical infidel.

The third instance is not so striking, but is I think to be found in a character, whose singularity as well as general uniformity with itself is universally and deservedly admired, and was a particular favorite with its author on this very account. I mean [T] Sir Roger de Coverly in the Spectator. But is his conduct throughout the work consonant with the original delineation of his character? Or can his singularities, however amiable and however entertaining, be at all said to [U] 'proceed from his good sense, and be contradictions to the manners of the world, only as he thinks the world is in the wrong?'

There are many comedies whose catastrophe depends entirely on this want of uniformity of manners. I mean those in which the event of the fable turns on an entire and radical change of character in one of the principal persons. Where, as Mr. Harris observes, with as much humour as justice, 'The old gentleman of the drama, after having fretted and stormed through the first four acts, towards the conclusion of the fifth is unaccountably appeased. At the same time the dissipated coquette, and the dissolute fine gentleman whose vices cannot be occasional but must clearly be habitual, are in the space of half a scene

[T] The character of Sir Roger did not, it seems, suit the delicacy of Shenstone. In his Essays on Men, Manners, and Things, where he chuses to draw what he calls a character, and a most insipid one it is, and make him talk common-place nonsense among the tombs at Westminster, he concludes by saying he 'sometimes boasted that he was a distant relation of Sir Roger de Coverly.' If he was, 'I am afraid his lady mother played false,' for there is not the most distant family likeness.

[U] Spectator, No. II.

'miracu-



‘ miraculously reformed, and grow at once as completely good as if they  
 ‘ had never been otherwise.’

Some instances may however be produced in which a sudden and yet lasting reformation may not be improbable, as in Lady Townly. We may conceive a young woman of good natural disposition, but led into habits of dissipation by company and fashion, to be really convinced of her error by one striking incident: but we can never believe that any thing can cure the brutal suspicion of Strictland [x].

[x] No two passions can be more different than jealousy and suspicion. The one is the offspring of brutality, and may be unconnected with love; the other is the certain proof of a most violent and unreasonable passion. Hoadley in the Suspicious Husband has once, and I believe once only, confounded these characters when he makes Strictland say he cannot bear that even a woman should partake in his wife's love. This is jealousy though pushed to excess. Mrs. Brooks in Emily Montague makes Colonel Rivers express the violence of his passion in these words: ‘ I would engross, I would employ, I would absorb every faculty  
 ‘ of that lovely mind.’ Othello reasons, if I may use the expression, in the same manner, when he says,

— ‘ I'd rather be a toad,

‘ And feed upon the vapor of a dungeon,

‘ Than keep a corner in the thing I love

‘ For other's uses.’—



## NOTE VI.

EVEN IF AN INCONSISTENT PERSON IS THE OBJECT OF IMITATION, THE CHARACTER SO IMITATED SHOULD BE MADE CONSISTENTLY INCONSISTENT.

MR. TWINING begins one of his notes (101) with the observation that Aristotle affords so many passages to exercise the penetration and conjectures of the critics, that they might be perfectly satisfied without inventing them when they do not find them. An observation that seems peculiarly applicable to this passage, which I own appears to me perfectly plain, and in the common and literal acceptation very naturally and even necessarily connected with what immediately precedes it. After Aristotle had mentioned consistency as one of the essential requisites of manners, it occurred to him that there might be, and perhaps he recollected there actually were, characters whose leading feature was inconsistency; and that he might be supposed to mean that the manners of such persons were improper for poetical imitation. He therefore explains himself by saying such characters were not improper, provided the inconsistency was kept up throughout the whole conduct of the character, and the person was not made to act consistently with himself in some instances, and inconsistently in others. A very learned and elegant critic however has chosen to give a new meaning to this observation. One of his objections is, that such an inconsistent character is not proper for tragedy. He was induced to this idea by the character given to Tigellius by Horace, which so naturally suggests itself to the recollection of the reader. But it is by no means improbable, that



that such characters may be found in the higher and more serious ranks of life, the consequences of whose inconsistency may be as productive of tragic distress as that of Tigellius is of comic ridicule [x].

Bishop Hurd is at great pains to prove, that by *ὁμαλῶς ἀνόμαλον* he means that a person in some things inconsistent, may yet be so managed by the poet as to be made consistent with the basis of his character. And as an example of this, he brings Electra, and strange to tell, Iphigenia, the very character marked out by Aristotle to exemplify blameable inconsistency of manners. The Bishop says, that Iphigenia is more easily vindicated from this charge of inconsistency, than even Electra, notwithstanding this charge of Aristotle against her. It may be so; but if it is so, if Aristotle knew what he meant, or had any meaning at all, he could not intend to praise in Electra what he censures in Iphigenia. If the character of Iphigenia is an inconsistency consistent with the basis of the character, it is proof positive that such is not the meaning of Aristotle's *ὁμαλῶς ἀνόμαλον*, which must be some quality that the manners of Iphigenia did not possess. To bring the very character quoted by Aristotle as an instance of the breach of a dramatic rule, for an example of the exception to such rule on his own supposed principles, and that by changing the received and obvious meaning of the words defining such exception, can hardly be justified by the canons of sober criticism.

The idea of Mr. Markland, mentioned by Mr. Twining, that the inconsistency of Iphigenia 'was intended by the poet as a moral lesson,

[x] See Mr. Twining, Note III, whose observations on this passage, and on the Bishop of Worcester's criticism, are as usual, accurate and convincing.



‘ a striking picture of the “ levity and inconsistency of the human mind,” reminds us of an observation of Brumoy, on part of the conduct of Jocasta in the *Œdipus* of Sophocles. ‘ We perceive (he says) that the trouble of *Œdipus* has so much encreased, and that his scruples concerning the death of Laius have taken such deep root in his heart, that Jocasta, to deliver him from them, becomes all at once pious instead of impious, as she appeared at first. She goes to consult the gods: admirable character! she is a free-thinker in the first act and now a religious enthusiast, and this because both the effects are produced by the different circumstances she is in. Such is the human heart. In going to the temple she meets the Corinthian shepherd, who reassures her concerning the fate of *Œdipus*, and she thinks no more of the gods.’

By the way, after all to take the Bishop’s own words, is not the substance of them a distinction without a difference? for what is such a character as Tigellius but an inconsistent person drawn consistent with the basis of his character, since that basis is inconsistency?

#### NOTE VII.

SO ACHILLES IS DRAWN AS A GOOD CHARACTER EVEN BY

HOMER.

THE paragraph preceding that of which this sentence is the conclusion, whether from being displaced by transcribers or from the desultory mode of composition so frequently apparent in this work, seems to have little to do with the rest of this chapter. Here however Aristotle returns to his subject. He has before been giving examples of the breach



breach of three of the essential qualities of manners, goodness as in the character of Menelaus, propriety as in Ulysses and Menalippe, and consistency as in Iphigenia. We may now suppose him to recollect his omission of the other, of which probably the Achilles in the same tragedy may have been generally quoted as an example, where, in order to give him the requisite poetical goodness of character, the poet has deviated from his traditional manners, and even the manners, according to Plato [Y], given him by Homer. In answer to this the critic points out the mode by which the faults of a traditional character may be so represented as not to lose their resemblance, and yet retain the necessary poetical goodness; and this he not only gives such directions how to perform as must appear to every person perfectly consonant with reason, but he illustrates it by the example of the usual practice of another imitative art. And having done this, he observes that even Homer, who has been supposed to have followed a different plan, has really given the requisite poetical goodness of character to Achilles.

The contrary opinion however seems to have been generally adopted, even by the moderns; and many are ready to join in opinion with Dr. Jortin, as quoted by Mr. Twining; 'that Achilles is a boisterous, rapacious, mercenary, cruel and unrelenting brute; and the reader pities none of his calamities, and is pleased with none of his successes.' This is rather a summary mode of deciding a question by a sentence, which if just, is a complete condemnation of the father of poetry, and all his admirers. For if Homer has so drawn Achilles as to make him not only

[Y] See the passage quoted from Plato's Republic, by Mr. Twining, where the Achilles of Homer is accused of possessing together the two opposite vices of mean rapaciousness, and insolent contempt both of gods and men.



completely bad, but completely despicable and uninteresting, the Iliad is essentially defective; and those who have admired it, or rather have pretended to admire it, have acted in opposition to their own feelings. Perhaps many modern readers, and Dr. Jortin among the rest, have never been much interested either in the character of Achilles or in any part of the Iliad or Odyssey; as these divine poems are seldom introduced to us in a very pleasing manner, and as early associations of ideas are not very easily eradicated [z], perhaps some feelings of restraint and punishment may always be connected with a work with which we were first acquainted, under the influence of such circumstances. To recur to my own feelings on this subject, it happened to me, that my first knowledge of the Tale of Troy divine was unaccompanied by any restraint, and yet drawn from the Iliad. [A] Pope's Homer being one of the first books I ever read for my own amusement, I declare I was as much interested in the character of Achilles as I ever was for the most perfect hero of novel or romance. I certainly was then no critic, and had never heard of Ari-

[z] I think this is a strong objection to the use of the scriptures, in the teaching either English, Latin, or Greek.

[A] I do not pretend to say Pope gives an accurate copy of the original, but a much more perfect idea of the general story of the Iliad would be acquired even by Ogilvie's translation, read so as to comprehend the whole, than by reading and studying the original in parts. I could gain a more accurate idea of the general and relative situation of a country by looking at a map for ten minutes, than I could by riding over it, without such assistance, in as many years. Mr. Spence declares in his Polymetis, he never perfectly understood the Epistles and Satires of Horace, as to their general connection, till he read Pope's Imitations of them. Pope has not given Achilles virtues denied him by Homer; but a striking instance of the contrary conduct is pointed out by Dr. Beattie in his Essay on Poetry and Music, Part 1, Chap. iv. page 81. note. In the same place will be found a complete and unanswerable defence of the Achilles of Homer against such critics as Dr. Jortin.

stotle,



stotle, and what I read of him occasionally in the notes I did not understand; but I as certainly could not be deceived as to my own feelings.

How often have we heard the absurd story of Achilles being invulnerable every where except in the heel, (which is mentioned by no ancient writer except Statius) imputed to Homer. [B] Tom Brown, of facetious memory, but a very good classical scholar, taking this for granted, makes this curious, and indeed if he were right in his first assertion, just remark. 'Homer not only makes Achilles invulnerable every where but in his heel, but likewise bestows a suit of impenetrable armour upon his invulnerable body. [C] Bully Dawson would have fought the devil with these advantages.' So far however has Homer been from giving Achilles any unfair advantage over his principal antagonist, that he takes great pains to make Hector his match. Whatever excellence there was in armour made by a divine artist and given by the gods, such armour was possessed by Hector; as he had taken from Patroclus, the arms worn by Achilles through the first nine years of the war; and as for his being invulnerable, besides the proof I have brought [D] elsewhere, and particularly the wound given him by Asteropæus in his hand, in the twenty-first Iliad; in the eighteenth Iliad, when the body of his friend Patroclus

[B] He was the first English critic who noticed the impropriety of calling such irregular compositions as the Odes of Cowley, Pindaric Odes.

[C] For an account of this hero, the reader is referred to a note on the second number of the Spectator. Edition of 1789.

[D] In a note on verse 112 (82 in the translation) of the ninth Olympic Ode of Pindar.



is on the point of being seized by the Trojans, and he is desired to interfere by a message from Juno, he excuses himself and with some degree of petulance as if to an unreasonable request [E]. ‘How can I go into the battle? They have got my armour, and I know of no other whose armour I can put on unless the shield of Ajax Telamon, and that is I hope already engaged among the front ranks of the battle.’ If Achilles was invulnerable then he did not know it himself. Neither did Eustathius who, though he has a long note on this passage, does not drop the remotest hint of it [F].

[E] See Iliad XVIII. v. 187. I have not taken Mr. Pope’s version, because when an author is quoted to establish any point of this sort, his literal sense is necessary; besides the word arms used by Pope is equivocal, but the Greek words *ἐνὶ ἔλκεα* and *τεύχεα* signify only defensive armour. Pope however, though the words he puts in the mouth of Achilles are not so expressive of indignation as the original, shews he felt the idea, by adding—‘He cries, (with fury warm’d.)’

[F] In the note on Pindar above-mentioned, I have taken notice of an observation of a scholiast on that poet, and another on verse 820 of Iliad XXIII, which shew that Ajax being invulnerable, was a popular story among the ancients. In Villoison’s edition of Homer, with the ancient Scholia, where particular passages are distinguished by such a mark as this  $\epsilon$ , which is called *διπλὴ καθαρά*, there is one on that very verse, and its occasion noted in these words, *ἡ διπλὴ ὅτι ἐκ τῶν καὶ τῶν τοιούτων φαίνεται καθ’ Ὁμήρου μὴ ὡς ἀτρέως ὁ Αἴας*: ‘The mark is put because from this verse and others like it, it appears that Ajax was not invulnerable according to Homer;’ a proof certainly that there was an opinion at least that Homer had made Ajax invulnerable.



## NOTE VIII.

THESE RULES OUGHT TO BE OBSERVED; AND NOT ONLY THESE,  
BUT SUCH ALSO AS REGARD THOSE OBJECTS OF THE OTHER  
SENSES THAT NECESSARILY ACCOMPANY DRAMATIC POETRY.

BY this I imagine Aristotle means the theatrical apparatus, such as the drefs, and masks of the actors, on the proper adapting of which to various characters, much of the effect of dramatic representation must have depended.

In the article of drefs both the ancient and modern theatre were much in the same circumstance; but as to the masks, the ancients, at least in comedy, as we may gather from Julius Pollux, were mechanically exact in adapting them to particular characters, which cannot be the case as to the modern stage where the actors appear without such monstrous disguises.

However the manners, both as to the drefs and the figure of the actors may be divided in the same way as in the composition of the drama itself.

For first as to goodness. It is obvious that the drefs of the characters not only in tragedy, but in comedy and even farce, must be above the level of real life, as is evident in the theatrical representation of shepherds and beggars. As to the person of the performer the same holds in a more essential degree especially in actresses. In real life we know

Y y

from



from every day's experience, that very plain women are capable of exciting very violent attachment; and if we look among our acquaintance for those who have formed imprudent connections with the sex, we shall not always find the objects remarkable for their personal charms. But a person who does not feel this particular attachment, or if he does, contemplates it in another person, can only conceive beauty as the natural object of love. [G] A Romeo therefore fighting to an ugly Juliet, and apparently turned of forty, will not only excite ridicule but disgust. The theatre is much more delicate in this respect than it was formerly. I have seen Mr. Havard and Mrs. Pritchard perform Constant and Lady Brute, when the progress of age and decay was marked not only by their figure but by the tremulous modulation of their voice. This however never appeared in Garrick; he acted even young Hamlet and Archer with propriety till he quitted the stage.

One of the most beautiful and elegant women living either on or off the stage will, I hope, forgive me for citing her as an example of an impropriety exactly of an opposite nature; I mean in the character of Mrs. Oakley. I will not pretend to determine how far a most lovely and accomplished woman might, in real life, contrive to render herself disagreeable and troublesome to a husband, by constant and unreasonable jealousy; but every general spectator will be rather inclined to think the man, whom Miss Farren, from suspicious fondness, cannot bear to have out of her company a moment, an object of envy rather than pity or ridicule.

The requisite of goodness also on the modern theatre applies to the scenery, as in chambers and cottages; indeed this is also sometimes defective

[G] See Hill's Actor, passim.



from being too good. There is no possibility of representing the inside of Bobadil's 'convenient cabin,' on a London theatre.

Secondly, The dress and persons of the performers should be in character, and the scenery likewise. A soldier should not be dressed like a senator or acted by an old or feeble man; neither should the scene represent a room when the dialogue shews the action is in a wood.

The third requisite differs from this only as particular characters do from general ones. Prince Henry should not be as fat as Falstaff. Firelocks should not be introduced at the battle of Philippi; nor should the scene represent St. James's Park when Richard falls by the hand of his competitor in Bosworth field.

A breach of the fourth requisite consistency was fully exemplified by the practice of the old theatre taken notice of in Note v. on Chap. vi. when one or two characters only were dressed in the habit of the time or place of the drama, and the rest in the fashionable dress of the day.



## C H A P. XVI.

## NOTE I.

THE DISCOVERY HAVING BEEN ALREADY DEFINED, WE WILL NOW DISTINGUISH ITS DIFFERENT FORMS.

THE FIRST, WHICH IS THE LEAST ARTFUL, AND TO WHICH THE GENERALITY OF POETS IN THEIR DEFICIENCY OF GENIUS RESORT, IS THAT BY TOKENS.

THE critic having in the eleventh chapter, given a general definition of the discovery as an essential incident to the interest of poetic fable, proceeds now to mention and distinguish the merit of its various forms, beginning according to his usual method with that which he esteems lowest in point of excellence.

He divides this mode by tokens, first into natural and adventitious; and these he subdivides again into such as are produced on purpose and such as happen accidentally. Of all these our theatre affords examples. The tokens that occasion the discovery of Douglas and of Indiana in the Conscious Lovers, are accidental and adventitious. That of Almanzor in the Conquest of Grenada is accidental and natural. That of Arviragus in Cymbeline is natural and shewn on purpose. That of [A] Sir William

[A] Perhaps this does not exactly come under the predicament of the spear and embroidery of Orestes, as he is rather recognized by his person than his star and ribbon.



Honeywood in the Good-natured Man, is adventitious and shewn on purpose.

I confess I do not see the difference as to merit, between the accidental and intentional discovery which Aristotle insists on, and upon which his general scale of excellence seems so much to depend. This circumstance seems to me to be entirely regulated by the situation of the character. If he even knows himself his own situation and wishes to conceal it, as in the case of Ulysses and Euryclea in the nineteenth book of the *Odyssæy*, it must be accidental, as it certainly must if he is ignorant of his own situation as in Douglas. But if conscious himself who he is, though concealed from others, he chuses to discover himself as in the case of Ulysses to Eumæus and Philætiüs in the twenty-second book of the *Odyssæy*; or if unconscious himself, a person who knows his situation like the old man in *Merope* and Belarius in *Cymbeline* discovers him, I must think the intentional discovery infinitely preferable.

The intentional discovery even by merely throwing off a disguise, as in the Countess of Salisbury, and the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, has a fine theatrical effect. Perhaps there is no instance more striking than Æneas's discovery of himself in the second *Æneid*.

[B] ——— ‘Coram quem quæritis adsum  
‘Troius Æneas Libicis ereptus ab undis.’

[B] The spirit of this is lost in the translations. For me to attempt the restoration of it after such names as Dryden and Warton, would be at once folly and presumption. Shakspear however has caught it not indeed from Virgil, but from nature.

‘ ——— This is I ———  
‘Hamlet the Dane ———



## NOTE II.

THE SECOND ARE THOSE INVENTED BY THE POET AND  
THEREFORE INARTIFICIAL.

THIS passage at first sight appears very extraordinary as all the modes of discovery may be said to be invented by the poet. But Aristotle soon explains himself by the example he gives of [c] Orestes in the Iphigenia in Tauris, who is not discovered to his sister as she is to him by a natural and accidental circumstance, but from saying what the poet chose to put in his mouth: that is in fact by declaring directly he is Orestes, and bringing such proof as he, or rather the poet thought necessary, as describing a particular spear, and a piece of Electra's embroidery, which used to be in her chamber, and which from the reserved life of the women of Greece, could have been only seen by a near connection as a father or brother. But this mode of discovery the critic adds borders on what he had blamed in the former species, the introduction of tokens for the sole purpose of confirming the discovery; for Orestes might as well have [d] actually introduced a token, as recalled the memory of one. For this sense of the passage I acknowledge myself obliged to Mr. Twining. It perfectly agrees with the context. The similitude between this and the first mode is striking as well as with the web of Philomela; for however affected 'the voice of a shuttle' may be to

[c] Perhaps the whole circle of fable ancient and modern, does not afford a more interesting and affecting discovery than that of Joseph to his brothers in the sacred scriptures.

[d] Εξήν γὰρ ἔνια καὶ ἐνεγχεῖν. See note on the translation.

express



express [E] a story represented in embroidery, it seems to be the most reasonable interpretation that can be given of it: and its resemblance with the embroidery of Electra is very obvious. Neither do I think the objection started by Mr. Twining, that a traditional circumstance like this, could not be said to be an invention of the poet has much weight. For though the story is now very common from being related in so popular a work as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it does not follow it was so in the time of Sophocles, or that he might not have invented it in the tragedy now mentioned. That such a thing is very possible appears from the tale of Achilles being invulnerable[F]; which, though imputed to Homer, seems to have originated with Statius.

## NOTE III.

## THE THIRD FORM IS BY RECOLLECTION.

THIS cannot mean that the recollection is itself the immediate cause of the discovery, but that it occasions the person recollecting to discover himself by some sudden exclamation, passion, or action. For such are the two examples given by Aristotle. A person bursting into tears on the sight of a picture[G], and Ulysses weeping at the recital of his

[E] This is however greatly softened by the very probable conjecture of Mr. Twining, that this expression is not the language of Aristotle but a quotation from the tragedy. Suppose the words in answer to a question of Tereus, 'Whose voice condemns me?' and accompanied with the production or mention of the web.

[F] See Note VII. Chap. xv.

[G] Virgil if he had chosen it, might have availed himself of this circumstance, which he has used in his first *Æneid*, to have discovered Æneas to Dido, but he preferred the mode mentioned in the first note on this chapter.



own adventures. The discovery of Lady Randolph to the old Shepherd in Douglas, and that of Julia in the Two Gentlemen of Verona, where she faints on hearing Valentine offer Sylvia to his rival, are exactly in the same predicament.

Perhaps the most whimsical discovery in any drama, and which is also caused by a sudden exclamation, is in the original French opera of Richard Cœur de Lion, where the old Knight is discovered to be an Englishman by saying GODDAM.

#### NOTE IV.

##### THE FOURTH IS BY REASONING.

THIS mode of discovery must also come under the same class with the preceding one, and arise from some sudden effect wrought on the character by his reasoning, or rather from his reasoning being over-heard, which occasions his discovery, and not from the reasoning itself. For an inference occasioned by the circumstances, is the source of every kind of discovery; as recollection, mentioned in the last note is the cause of our recognizing the person in the morning whom we parted with the evening before. Besides all the examples given by Aristotle imply this, except that from the Choephoræ if the tragedy of that name written by Æschylus is meant, which remains to be proved, [H], as several tragedies of the same name and even on the same story may differ, and frequently do, as to the manner of arranging the circumstances of the fable, and bringing about the catastrophe.

[H] See Note IV. Chap. XVIII. See also Mr. Twining, Note 130.



This mode seems to border strongly on the worst possible discovery that of over-hearing a soliloquy, as in the discovery of King Henry to the Foresters in Hen. VI. Part III.

## NOTE V.

THERE IS ALSO A COMPOUND [I] SPECIES OF DISCOVERY ARISING FROM A FALSE REASONING OF THE SPECTATORS.

THE precise meaning of the paragraph of which this sentence is a part, and especially the example included in it, baffles all conjecture. The only rational meaning that can be supposed is, that besides these modes of discovery where the reasoning is just, there may be a mode in which, from the combination of various circumstances, the spectator may be induced to think there is sufficient proof to infer the reality of the person discovered, and yet on examination such an inference will not logically follow from the premises.

As to the tragedy produced as an example, all seems utter obscurity. I will however mention a conjecture on the subject communicated to me by a learned and ingenious friend, which is at least very plausible. He supposes the tragedy in question to be taken from the discovery of Ulysses to Penelope in the twenty-third book of the *Odyssæy*, and in

[1] Aristotle calls this mode of discovery ΣΥΝΘΕΤΟΣ ἐκ παραλογισμῶν τῶν θεάτρων. 'Synthesis' 'by combining simple terms produces a truth' (or a falsehood if the premises or reasoning are false ἐκ παραλογισμῶν). *Hermes*, Book I. Chap. I. page 3, and then in a note. Περὶ γὰρ σύνθεσιν καὶ διάρσεις ἐστὶ τὸ ψευδὲς τε καὶ τὸ ἀληθές. 'True and false are seen' 'in composition and division.'



which he is disguised as a messenger instead of a beggar; a change certainly very consonant with the dignity of tragic representation when compared with epic description. And he proposes, that instead of *τόζον* we should read *τοῖχον* [κ]. This conceded, the whole answers my notion of the sense of the passage. Penelope who is neither satisfied of the identity of Ulysses, by the testimony of Telemachus and Euryclea, nor by a miracle wrought in favour of her husband by his restoration to the youth and figure he possessed on his leaving her twenty years before, is at last convinced by his description of her nuptial bed, which he had framed himself, and which no one else had seen but a faithful slave named Actoris.

‘ The secrets of the bridal bed are known  
 ‘ To thee, to me, to Actoris alone,  
 ‘ (My father’s present in the spousal hour,  
 ‘ The sole attendant on our genial bower,)  
 ‘ Since what no eye has seen thy tongue reveal’d,  
 ‘ Hard and distrustful as I am, I yield.’

POPE’S *Odyssey*, L. XXIII. v. 241.

Original, v. 225.

[κ] The words are so alike as to be easily confounded by a careless or a conceited transcriber, who recollecting how much depends on a bow at the conclusion of the *Odyssey*, might be tempted to change them on purpose, as the article *τὸ* which marks the gender, Mr. Win-  
 Stanley observes is omitted in one MS. The word *τοῖχος* seems particularly applied to a bridal chamber in Canticles, Chap. II. ver. 9.

Ἴδὸν ἄνθρωπος ἔστηκεν ὀπίσω τῆ τοίχῃ ἡμῶν

Παρακύνειον διὰ τῶν θυρίδων.

I know the interpreters render this WALL, but it does not seem to agree with the context; and the Hebrew word *חֵטֶל* which occurs only in this place, seems derived from the same word in Arabic, which as a verb signifies, to unite, COEGIT IN UNUM, and as a substantive, union, ADUNATIO, CUM QUID SIMUL COGITUR.

This



This certainly was not a sufficient proof of the identity of Ulysses [L], because there was a possibility of Actoris having betrayed the secret; therefore whatever may have been the case with the spectators of the Ulysses Pseudangelus, the readers of the *Odyssæy* if they suppose the discovery of Ulysses to Penelope completely confirmed by this circumstance are guilty of a paralogism, they draw a false conclusion from the premises. I must add, that in real life we often find persons raising objections where no difficulty occurs, objecting to arguments that ought to convince them, and being satisfied at last by a reason that ought not to convince them [M].

There is an objection however to this solution which it is necessary to notice. The discovery of Orestes to Iphigenia mentioned in Note II. on this Chapter, is exactly liable to the same observation. The spear and embroidery might as well have been known to other eyes besides those of Orestes, as the bridal chamber of Penelope might to others, besides Ulysses and Actoris. The force of this objection will depend much on

[L] See Pope's Note on v. 183, of the twenty-third book of his translation of the *Odyssæy*. One part of which in particular is so very apposite to this passage that I shall cite it. 'Granting that the person before her [Penelope] was a real man, and that no man but Ulysses was acquainted with the nuptial bed, it follows that this man is the real Ulysses.' But neither of these premises can be granted. For the person, as suggested by Eustathius, might have been a god, or Actoris might have betrayed the secret to a man.

[M] Though the bed-chambers of the Grecian ladies were so much more secluded from general observation, than those of the beauties of modern Europe, yet perhaps it would not have been out of character in Penelope, considering her extreme incredulity, to have said, on this last proof with Posthumus in *Cymbeline*,

— 'This is a thing  
'Which you might from relation likewise reap.'



the usual accuracy or inaccuracy of Aristotle's examples, and the observation of the reader, whether he finds them comprehending every circumstance of resemblance, or only pointing in one particular instance to the object he wishes to illustrate.

There is a passage in the [N] twenty-fourth chapter of the Poetic where Aristotle is speaking of the epopee, obviously alluding to the same subject, and equally obscure. Had either been clear it might have illustrated the other; perhaps some happier critic may be able to strike out a spark of light from their mutual opacity.

## NOTE VI.

BUT OF ALL MODES OF DISCOVERY, THAT IS THE BEST WHICH IS DERIVED FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES THEMSELVES.

I PERFECTLY agree with Mr. Twining, Notes 133, 134, in considering this as distinguished by the critic from all the other classes. Indeed this is not only expressly marked by the word 'alone' (*μόνοι*) but from the real fact: for besides the jewels and natural marks which are necessary either for the production or confirmation of the discovery in the two first forms, those tokens also which are in consequence of recollection and inference, may equally be esteemed not only as inventions of the poet, but as invented for the immediate purpose of the discovery.

[N] See Note VII. Chap. XXIV.

To



To form a proper discovery of this kind is of all the arts of the poet by far the most difficult. [P] We have already mentioned how hard a task it is to keep a principal character concealed both from the audience and other persons of the drama during the course of the play, by whatever mode the discovery is made; but when the discovery at last is to arise, and be confirmed by the preceding incidents only, the difficulty is increased to such a degree as to be only surmountable by the efforts of superior genius. What can put both the invention and judgment of the poet to so great an exertion as to contrive his incidents in such a manner that the audience, or the reader should never once conceive the real situation of his principal character, and yet when his real situation is revealed, it should be confirmed by a retrospect examine of those incidents.

My most diligent recollection will furnish me with no example ancient or modern of a composition in which this arduous task is strictly and perfectly executed, except that wonderful effort of judgment and imagination the comic epopee of Tom Jones. No reader I believe ever guessed that the hero of the piece would turn out to be the nephew of Allworthy and the son of Mrs. Bridget, till the moment before the discovery takes place, and yet how natural is the behaviour of those who know the circumstance, when the incidents are examined afterwards. With what nice touches is the conduct of the mother expressed, and especially her partiality to Jones; and Dowling, when he accidentally meets Jones on the road, actually calls Allworthy his uncle without giving the reader the least suspicion of the truth; so inimitable is the art of the poet.

[P] See Note II. Chap. XI. and Note IV. Chap. XIV.



The *Œdipus* though a masterpiece of this kind is by no means of equal merit. [Q] It was impossible, during so long a stay at Thebes, but *Œdipus* must have heard of the death of *Laius*, and the exposure of his infant son, so concurrent with the response of the oracle to him, which occasioned his determination not to return to Corinth. Aristotle observed this defect, and he has tried to palliate it by remarking that it occurred prior to the opening of the drama, or as Mr. Bays would have expressed himself, 'Long before the beginning of the play.'

[Q] See Note v. Chap. XIII.



## C H A P. XVII.

## NOTE I.

THE POET AS WELL WHEN HE COMPOSES THE INCIDENTS AS WHEN HE ADDS THE LANGUAGE, OUGHT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO CONSIDER EVERY THING AS PASSING BEFORE HIS EYES.

THIS rule [A], by which the epopee is much less shackled, though by no means exempt from its observance, is of the utmost consequence to the dramatic poet. As to the instance of a drama failing in the representation from a neglect of this necessary care which Aristotle adduces, though the particular tragedy is lost, we may easily supply the nature of the error from conjecture. We may suppose Amphiaraus to be in a temple out of which it was impossible for him to come unobserved by the spectators, and then to appear on the stage without being perceived to come out of it.

From this observation Dacier infers the strict attention to the unity of place on the ancient theatre, of which we have spoken so largely before [B]. But surely it has nothing to do with it. It was undoubtedly not the general practice of the ancient theatre to change the supposed scene of action. And as the action from the continued presence of the chorus was seldom if ever interrupted, it was barely possible that a cha-

[A] See Note v. Chap. xxiv.

[B] See Note iii. Chap. v.

racter,



rafter, after being supposed to go into a confined place in the sight of the spectators could be conceived to come out again unseen by them, without violating, not the arbitrary rules of the drama, but the natural probability of the representation. And on the other hand, from the frequent change of scene and intervals of action this may happen on the modern, or at least on the English stage, without the least absurdity. But nevertheless though this is generally true of both, it is not universally true. When a change of scene is plainly implied by the language and incidents of the Grecian drama, such an event may take place there WITHOUT improbability; and if the identity of place and continuation of action is marked in an English drama, such an event cannot take place WITH propriety. In the *Eumenides* of *Æschylus*, where, after Apollo has persuaded Orestes to quit his temple at Delphos and repair to that of Minerva at Athens, his persecutors follow him, and afterwards he goes out himself; they may without impropriety all enter again at the same door, because that door, though according to the apparatus of the ancient theatre exactly the same, is now supposed to be changed from the temple of Apollo to that of Minerva; since between the verses 234 and 235 the scene is obviously changed from Delphos to Athens, and as Orestes and the chorus immediately appear, there must be a break in the action comprehending a considerable interval of time. And in an English play represented even without scenery in a private house, if a character were to go into a door, we will suppose as into a closet to be concealed, (a common incident in comedy,) and during the obvious continuation of the scene appear at another door, should not we laugh at the striking impropriety? Or to take a contrary instance from a particular play; if in the last scene of the *Clandestine Marriage*, Sir John Melville were to come out of the very door from which Lord Ogleby is summoning



summoning him, we should hardly agree with the learned Serjeant in pronouncing it to be the clearest ALIBI we ever saw proved.

The last scene of Shakespear's Romeo and Juliet seems to be at the same time both within and without the monument of the Capulets. The duel between Romeo and Paris is in the church-yard. The death of Romeo, as also the awakening and death of Juliet must be within the monument, the inside of which could not be seen from the church-yard, as on the entry of Friar Laurence he only discovers a light in it, on a nearer approach he discerns the blood of Paris on the stoney entrance, and obviously on looking down into the vault discovers the bodies of Romeo and Paris. To shew how this confirms the doctrine of Aristotle as to the difference between the epopee and tragedy in this respect, I never was struck by it though a frequent and attentive reader of our immortal bard, till I saw Mr. Northcote's picture in the Shakespear Gallery, who has drawn the scene in the inside of the vault with the body of Romeo lying at the foot of the stairs that lead down to the bottom of it.

In the play as now represented this is entirely obviated by the judicious alteration of Mr. Garrick. For Juliet awakens, and comes out of the tomb as Romeo is about to enter it.

It is necessary also for the dramatic poet to adapt his language to the action that must accompany it, especially in those striking situations which are most calculated to produce strong theatrical effect [c]. An

[c] We have no appropriated name for these in English. The French call them *coups DE THEATRE*.



over-fight of this kind seems to occur in the Grecian Daughter. When Euphrasia stabs Dionysius she exclaims,

- ‘ A daughter’s arm fell monster strikes the blow,
- ‘ Yes first she strikes ; an injur’d daughter’s arm
- ‘ Sends thee devoted to th’ infernal gods.’

All, or at least the greatest part of this seems to be intended to precede the blow : and yet probability requires that the blow of a woman that kills an armed warrior should be unforeseen and sudden [D]. The Regent affords another instance of this kind of impropriety. Just at the conclusion the Duke and the Usurper engage hand to hand before all the Duke’s friends. They should either have fought before the Duke’s attendants had arrived, or in presence of both parties who might have been supposed to have mutually awed each other from interfering [E].

[D] Mrs. Siddons felt the force of this. She strikes Dionysius without speaking a word, and repeats the passage over him as he lies on the ground.

[E] See this circumstance compared with what Aristotle says of the battle between Achilles and Hector in the Iliad. Note v. Chap. xxiv..



## NOTE II.

THOSE WHO ARE MOVED BY PASSIONS THEMSELVES WILL EXPRESS THOSE PASSIONS MOST FORCIBLY FROM THEIR OWN FEELINGS. HENCE HE WHO IS REALLY AGITATED, STORMS, AND HE WHO IS REALLY ANGRY UPBRAIDS MOST TRULY AND NATURALLY.

IT is surprising that this sense of the last sentence of the quotation which is the obvious and literal translation of the Greek, and exactly an illustration of the precept and observation it follows, and with which the succeeding comparison so exactly agrees, should have had a different meaning given it by all the translators and commentators before Mr. Twining; who indeed has not himself admitted it in the body of his translation, though he has completely established it in a note (138), to which the reader who entertains any doubt on the matter, is referred for conviction. The general sense hitherto given has been the necessity the poet has of feeling himself, who wishes to affect the feelings of others, and indeed this is the ultimate meaning of the precept, and therefore it is virtually though not literally of the same weight with the observation of Horace.

[F] 'To make me grieve be first your anguish shewn.'

COLMAN, v. 154.

[F] — 'Si vis me flere dolendum est  
'Primum ipsi tibi.'—

HOR. ART. POET. v. 102.



But Aristotle is not contented with saying what ought to be the final effect on the spectator or reader, he is telling us how to produce the cause of that effect, which is the natural expression of the passion by the poet, and which can only be done by his entering himself into the feelings of those he represents. By doing this, he says, he will certainly find the proper means of expressing those feelings; for who can so well utter the language of any passion as he who is at the time under the actual influence of it; having said this he pursues it no further, it being obvious that the best and most natural expression of passion will awake the strongest sympathy in the mind of the spectator.

It is very apparent that the same precept is applicable to the actor. In vain may the poet paint the passions naturally, if the player does not exhibit the picture to advantage in the representation; and to do this well, his imagination should be as susceptible as that of the poet. I have already mentioned a singular anecdote from Hill's Actor in confirmation of this [G].

The ancient actors could not have the same powers of enforcing the sentiments of the poet from their theatrical dress, or rather disguise. Yet even their natural feelings were of great effect in assisting the truth of their representation. There is a remarkable instance of this kind related by Aulus Gellius. 'There was a celebrated Grecian actor who  
' excelled all others in his action and the elegance and clearness of his  
' voice. His name was Polus. He performed the tragedies of the  
' best poets with propriety and confidence. This Polus lost an only son  
' whom he greatly loved. However when his grief was abated he re-

[G] See Note IV. Chap. XIII.

turned,



‘ turned to the exercise of his art. At this time being to play the part  
 ‘ of Electra in the tragedy of Sophocles, at Athens, he was to carry an  
 ‘ urn which was supposed to contain the ashes of Orestes. For accord-  
 ‘ ing to the subject of the play, Electra supposing herself to carry the  
 ‘ remains of her brother, deplores and laments his death as believing  
 ‘ him to have been murdered. Polus there, dressed in the mournful  
 ‘ habit of Electra, carried the urn and ashes of his son taken from the  
 ‘ sepulchre, and embracing them, as if they were those of Orestes, ful-  
 ‘ filled every requisite of his part, not with fictitious and imitative re-  
 ‘ presentation, but with true grief and serious lamentation; and while  
 ‘ he seemed to be only assuming a fabulous character, was sincerely  
 ‘ affected by real sorrow.’

Much has been said of the power of the pencil in expressing at the same time various and even opposite passions. This one of the best judges of the subject, Sir Joshua Reynolds, has pronounced impossible; all that painting can do, which is confined to an instant, is to express the succession of passion by the effect of a consequence of the former passion, as a tear stealing down a countenance beginning to smile, as Andromache

[H] — ‘ Mingled with her smile a tender tear.’ POPE.

Can an actor do more? or as much as we talk of being torn by contending passions, are we ever at the same instant actually occupied by two of a different tendency, though the transition may be so sudden as not to be easily perceptible?

[H] Δακρυόεν γελάσασα.

Hill.



Hill in his Actor says, ' Had I the power I would make a single tear  
' steal down the unaltered face of Cato while he speaks the famous line,

" Thanks to the gods, my boy has done his duty."

' Though at the expence of striking out the succeeding observation,

— " Rome fills his eyes

" With tears that flow'd not o'er his own dead son."

#### NOTE III.

HENCE THE FICTIONS OF A GOOD POET MAY BE SAID TO RE-  
SEMBLE THOSE OF A MADMAN.

I THINK not only the context and the spirit of this chapter, but the whole tenor of the treatise settles the meaning of this passage beyond the possibility of a doubt. Had Aristotle been treating of lyric and dithyrambic poetry there might have been some reason for supposing that by *μανικῆς* he might mean only violent poetical enthusiasm, the *MENS DIVINIOR* of Horace, which carried him

' Above this visible diurnal sphere.'

But the critic is not here, nor in any part of the Poetic speaking of daring flights of poetical fancy, or exaggerated pictures of life and manners, but is giving directions how best to excite the sentiments of pity and terror by faithful and natural copies of the real effect of those passions on the human breast, and the external signs by which they become manifest; and I conceive *μανικὸς* here to have its simple primitive signification of a maniac or madman. We are told that the poet should not  
only



only have an eye to the dramatic effect in his writings as to the representation, but should also while he is composing, put himself as much as possible into the situation of the character he is drawing; for by feeling the internal sensation of the passion he will be best able to express by language the external signs of it; for though no art can come up to the real effusions of nature, yet those who can most easily put themselves from the ductility of their imagination into similar situations, will imitate them with most exactness; this is obvious from what we may observe in madmen, they really fancy themselves from the disorder of their reasoning powers in situations totally foreign to the truth, and the impression is so strong that they act and speak entirely as if they were the identical persons, and in the precise situations which their distracted fancy suggests to them. Now a poet of a lively and plastic imagination, and who is capable of entering into the true spirit of the character and passion he is going to draw, should in some measure partake of this feature of madness, feeling and acting, almost as strongly in the situation of this imaginary character from the ductility of his fancy, as the madman does from the derangement of his intellects.

In the celebrated passage in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare has made exactly the same comparison; undoubtedly from his own reflection, for I believe none of his most sanguine admirers will suppose him trying purposely to illustrate a precept of the Stagirite; though no man who ever lived seems so capable of shooting his own soul into the bosom of the character he wished to draw. His example seems to be particularly directed to the imitation, if I may use the word, of supernatural and imaginary beings, in which he so much excelled.

“The



- ‘ The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,  
 ‘ Are of imagination all compact.  
 ‘ One fees more devils than vast hell can hold.  
 ‘ That is the madman.’——

With the lover we have nothing to do here.

- ‘ The poet’s eye in a fine frenzy rolling,  
 ‘ Doth glance from heav’n to earth, from earth to heav’n;  
 ‘ And as imagination bodies forth  
 ‘ The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen  
 ‘ Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing  
 ‘ A local habitation and a name;  
 ‘ Such tricks hath strong imagination.’

#### NOTE IV.

THE POET WHEN HE INVENTS HIS FABLE SHOULD FIRST FORM  
 IT GENERALLY.

THE critic here appears to illustrate what he has said before of the poet’s still retaining that character even when he writes on known stories [1]. The plan of the fable should first be generally drawn; the plot and its solution arranged; and then the episodic and subordinate parts added; and if the fable is purely fiction the names are invented; if founded entirely or in part on truth or tradition, they are inserted from the known story; of which last method he gives an instance both from the epopee and the drama.

[1] See Note v. Chap. ix.



These instances seem sufficiently to prove that Aristotle does not confine himself here to such fables as are entirely the invention of the poet, as Mr. Twining imagines, (Note 142), for the *Odyssæy* must be at least a traditional if not an historical subject.

Perhaps the construction of epic and dramatic fable may in this respect be distinguished by three general classes, though each capable of receiving innumerable inferior distinctions and modifications. First, those which are purely historical, such as the *Iliad* and *Odyssæy*, the *Œdipus*, the historical plays of Shakespear, and the earl of Essex. Here the names are all historical, and the poet must on no pretence deviate from the known story in essential circumstances; all he can do is to find out such a fable, which though founded in fact has like the *Odyssæy*, the proper requisites of general truth, or may be made to have them by some additional touches. [K] As for instance in the tragedy of the earl of Essex, Voltaire is very severe on Corneille, (and the same reasoning will apply to our tragedies on the same subject) for making Elizabeth young when she was really a very old woman, as she certainly was at the death of Essex. M. Lessing in his *Dramaturgie* [L], though he carries, I think, his notion of general fable rather too far, adopting in some measure the opinions of Boissu, answers Voltaire on these principles, that if the queen, though at the age of sixty-eight, was amorous and jealous, in consequence of which an event very proper for a fable took place, there could be no impropriety in supposing her age to be more congenial with her passions [M]. Were Elizabeth on the stage to appear an old woman, the

[K] See Note iv. Chap. xv.

[L] Part i. page 57.

[M] It is impossible for a drama to come nearer history than the *Antony and Cleopatra* of Shakespear, and yet much of the effect would suffer were one to be represented as between



the whole circumstance of the death of Essex would contain that mixture of the dreadful and the absurd, which though frequently found in the tragedies of real life would be very incongruous in dramatic fable.

The next are those which are partly historical, and partly fictitious, of which perhaps the *Iphigenia in Tauris* may be an instance [N]. All the traditional story may be, that on the point of being sacrificed she was saved by the interposition of Diana, and the rest the invention of the poet. The *Æneid*, and the tragedy of *King Lear*, as also the *Paradise Lost*, come under this form. The chief art of the poet here is to draw the manners of the known characters, as Aristotle requires with the proper likeness. In this the [O] *Æneid* is as defective, as the *Paradise Lost* is excellent.

When the fable and characters are entirely the invention of the poet, as in the *Flower of Agatho*, and in the *Regent*, the tragic and comic writer are in the same situation as to the structure of the fable [P], which they first form, and then add any casual names.

fifty and sixty and the other as forty. When Dryden, without any motive, chuses in his *All for Love* to make Ventidius reproach Antony with his declining age, and his natural incapacity for love, he gives a striking instance how the poet ought NOT to arrange historical incidents.

[N] There never was a more fantastick monster issued from the regions of fable than those absurd mixtures of truth and fiction the old French romance, such as the *Grand Cyrus*, and its spurious offspring the modern historical novel.

[O] I conceive the *Iliad* as the archetype of the received characters of the *Æneid*.

[P] See Note III. Chap. IX.

In



In all tragedies founded on novels the same distinctions hold as in those founded on real history. This was generally the case with our old writers, and especially Shakespear. I recollect no other of his plays, either tragedy or comedy, except the Merry Wives of Windsor, for the outline of which he is not indebted to some old tale. The tragic poets of the present day generally supply both incident and character from their own invention.



## C H A P. XVIII.

## NOTE I.

A PLOT AND ITS SOLUTION ARE INCIDENT TO EVERY TRAGEDY.

THE critic might have added, and to every kind of imitative fable.

I found a considerable difficulty in choosing proper terms to distinguish these material, and indeed essential parts of tragedy. The word plot indeed was perfectly familiar to the writers on the drama half a century ago, in consequence of which, though it is now out of use, I have adopted it. The word SOLUTION, though not usual, I preferred to borrowing the word *DENOUMENT* from our neighbours, or employing the harsh term *UNRAVELLING*, as it is certainly expressive of the meaning it is intended to convey. The plot then contains every part of the tale that is supposed to happen before the actual commencement of the drama, or the time supposed to be included in the epic poem itself, as also all that is comprehended in them, during which the spectator is in doubt as to the final issue of the story. The solution is the clearing up of that doubt, whether productive of happiness or misery. As all that is not solution is plot, (which comprehends every part of the play or poem, where the action does not stand still, except the catastrophe, and the circumstances from which it immediately arises,) it will be only necessary to specify the solution. That, in the *Iliad* is the cessation of the rage of Achilles; in the *Odyssey* the death of the suitors and the recognition of Ulysses by Penelope; in the *Æneid* the death of Turnus;

in



in the *Paradise Lost* the fall; in *King Lear*, as written by Shakespear, the death of Cordelia and Lear; in Tate's and Colman's alteration their deliverance; in *Much Ado about Nothing* the vindication of Hero's innocence; and in *Tom Jones* the discovery of his relation to Allworthy.

## NOTE II.

## THE PATHETIC.

THE examples given here of this species of tragedy, as the story of Ixion, and especially the tragedy of Ajax, confirm what has been said of the idea of pathos and pathetic among the ancients, as also what Aristotle says of the *Iliad* afterwards, as distinguished from the *Odysssey* [A]. Of this kind of tragedy our old writers furnish innumerable examples.

Shakespear, though by no means sparing of blood, is much more moderate than many of his contemporaries in this respect, unless we rank *Titus Andronicus* and the *Yorkshire* tragedy among his compositions.

## NOTE III.

## THE SIMPLE.

THIS species of tragedy has been already noticed in the tenth chapter [B]. In this the solution rises from the incidents alone, the

[A] See Ch. xi. Note [A] on the translation, and Note i. of the commentary on Ch. xxiv.

[B] See Note i. Chap. x.



plot naturally unravels itself without any violent change. Venice Preserved is an instance of this kind.

## NOTE IV.

THE DIFFERENCE OR SAMENESS OF ONE TRAGEDY AND ANOTHER MUST NOT BE ESTIMATED BY THE FABLE, BUT BY THE PLOT AND SOLUTION.

THIS is illustrated by the observation in the last chapter as to the general formation of the fable, and subsequent application of names. The tragedies of the Regent and the Countess of Salisbury, as to the general plan, and the plot and solution are radically the same, and both taken from the *Odyssey*. While the tragedy of *Zenobia*, written by Mr. Murphy, and Metastasio's opera of the same name, though both founded on the same historical event, related by Tacitus, from differing entirely as to the arrangement of the fable, and the plot and solution, are perfectly distinct dramas. A stronger instance yet may be drawn from *Romeo and Juliet* and *Caius Marius*, and the *Sophonisba* of Thomson and Lee.

Thus the poet has it in his power to transfer the same circumstances from a popular to an unpopular subject. From whatever reason it arises, the observation of Dr. Johnson that mythological fables do not succeed on the English stage is founded on experience. The English like the Roman poets are fond of domestic story.



‘ ——— Vestigia Græca

‘ Aufi deferere & celebrare domestica facta [c].’

On which lines there are some very judicious observations in Bishop Hurd's notes on the Epistle to the Pisos. I think the *Odyssæy* as proper a fable for the drama as any I am acquainted with. But nothing would be so great an advantage as to follow the example of the [D] author of the *Countess of Salisbury*, and give the incidents an old English garb, which is so well fitted to them. How easily is the Trojan war changed to a crusade, Ulysses made a feudal chief, ([E] which by the way he much more resembles than the pompous sovereign Pope has made him,) and concealed as a pilgrim instead of a beggar.

[F] The happiest instance I know of a transition like this, is the *Edward and Eleonora* of Thomson, taken from the *Alcestes* of Euripides.

[c] ‘ And boldly quitting Grecia's beaten ways,

‘ They twine for native chiefs, dramatic bays.’

According to Le Pere Brumoy the French entirely differ from us in this respect. See DISCOURS SUR LE PARALLELE DES THEATRES.

[D] I only speak as to the design; the execution of it is below mediocrity. Besides I believe the author never thought immediately of the *Odyssæy*, but only copied it through the medium of the novel called *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury*.

[E] See Note I. Chap. xxiv.

[F] This was attended with peculiar difficulty as the English poet was obliged to produce the solution by nature, which the Greek poet had effected by a machine. On this account an improbability is incurred in the English drama. We may allow Hercules, after the good office he has done, to play a little with the feelings of Admetus. But to suppose such characters as Selim, as Gloucester, as Theald, and even as Eleonora herself, would keep Edward  
a moment



## NOTE V.

**THERE ARE MANY WHO FORM THE PLOT WELL, AND THE SOLUTION ILL.**

**THERE** are two causes which chiefly lead to this fault. One is a weariness of the subject towards the end of the piece, and the consequent desire of precipitating the catastrophe: a fault sometimes found in Shakespear, in common with other dramatic writers of his time[G]. The other is when a writer has so involved his character in difficulties, that it is out of his power to extricate him by probable means; and not being able to untie the Gordian knot, he is forced to cut it [H].

This observation of Aristotle may be inverted: for there are poets who form the solution well and the plot ill. Such are those who, fixing on some striking event before-hand for the catastrophe of the piece, are afterwards at a loss for preparatory incidents to fill up, with sufficient interest, the long space of five acts [I].

a moment in suspense is highly improbable, especially as the result of Eleonora's concealment is a trial of the prince's constancy; a most indelicate circumstance, from which Alcestes is perfectly clear, as she is entirely passive in the business. There is some resemblance to this in the solution of *Much Ado About Nothing*; but Hero is a most insipid character; otherwise she would not have thought Claudio's ready acceptance of her supposed cousin a great compliment to her own memory.

[G] See Note 1. Chap. VII.

[H] See Note VII. Chap. XIII.

[I] See Note II. Chap. XII.



There is an excellent observation of Marmontel on this subject. He says, 'A capital defect, of which the ancients set the example, and which the moderns have but too much imitated, is the languor of the solution. This defect arises from a faulty distribution of the fable in five acts; of which the first is devoted to the opening the subject to the spectators, the three that follow to the [κ] complication of the intrigue, and the last to the solution. According to this division the greatest danger lies in the fourth act, and to fill the fifth act it becomes necessary to [L] unravel the intrigue slowly and by degrees, which cannot fail to render the catastrophe tedious and cold. But the suddenness of the solution ought never to lessen its probability, nor its probability to lessen its uncertainty. Conditions easily fulfilled separately, but very difficult to reconcile with each other.

'It happens very rarely at present, that one or other of these two censures is not incurred: the solution either is deficient in point of preparation, or of suspense. We carry with us to our pathetic plays two principles directly opposite; feelings which wish to be interested, and an understanding which dislikes to be deceived. Our pretensions to judge of every thing cause us to enjoy nothing. [M] We wish at the same time to foresee the situations and be affected by them; to contrive with the author and feel with the people; to have our senses deluded and not deluded. New pieces have particularly this disadvantage that we go to them less as spectators than as critics. There every connoisseur is as it were double, and his heart finds a very troublesome

[κ] 'Au nœud de l'intrigue.'

[L] DENOUEMENT.

[M] The critic, as described here, is just in the situation of a man who wishes at the same time to be deceived by the tricks of a juggler, and find out how they are done.



‘ neighbour in his judgement. Therefore the poet who had formerly  
 ‘ only to seduce the imagination, has now also to surprize the dictates of  
 ‘ cool reflexion. If the clue that leads to the solution escapes the view,  
 ‘ we cry it is too weak ; if it appears, we say it is too gross. What then  
 ‘ is the poet to do? To work on the soul, and pay no regard to the  
 ‘ cold analysis of the understanding.’ *ENCYCLOPÉDIE, ARTICLE*  
*DÉNOUEMENT.*

## NOTE VI.

IN THE TRAGEDIES THAT DEPEND ON THE PERIPETÍA AND  
 THOSE THAT HAVE A SINGLE ACTION, SUCH POETS OFTEN  
 ATTAIN THEIR PURPOSE; WHICH IS TO PRODUCE TRAGIC  
 EFFECT, AND AT THE SAME TIME GRATIFY OUR FEELINGS  
 BY MEANS WHICH APPEAR WONDERFUL.

I HAVE in this edition adopted the general sense given to this passage by Mr. Twining, as well as the division of the whole passage, which I think perfectly just [N]. Aristotle has condemned Agatho for crowding too many incidents into his drama. He now specifies in what he, and writers of the same kind excel[o]. As to the expression of the

[N] See his note 155.

[O] As it does not appear that this excellence has any relation to the above-mentioned defect, he appears only to point out this merit of Agatho as a kind of set-off against the other fault. And when he classes other poets with him, as he does by the use of the plural verb *σοχάζονται*, he must mean, I think, poets of the same class with him in this particular excellence.



means being wonderful, [P] I would grasp at the slightest shadow that could justify the meaning I have ventured to give it, after Goulstone, Riccoboni, and Mr. Winstanley. Surprise, wonder, even improbability, are clearly the attendants of the kind of arrangement Aristotle is speaking of; and that they so appeared to him is equally clear from the apology he immediately makes for Agathos, by a quotation from his works.

As to his confining these kind of solutions to the tragedies depending on peripetia, and those of a single construction, I do not see the least propriety as to the last. *Ἀπλός* is in Chap. XIII. used twice by Aristotle, and each time in a different sense, once as opposed to complicated and once as opposed to double. (See Notes [A] and [C], on the translation of Chap. XIII.) If it is taken in the first sense as opposed to complicated, the two examples must take in every species of tragedy, for in the tenth chapter he mentions the distinction between the simple and complicated tragedy to depend on the one's having peripetia and discovery, and the other not having them. But every tragedy must either have or not have the peripetia and discovery. Neither does the other meaning of *Ἀπλός* (which of the two evils I have chosen) agree much better; since the overthrow of vice, though supported by wisdom and strength, manifestly must produce a different catastrophe for the good

[P] That *θαυμαστῶς* cannot have the sense of per admirabile, is obvious. Mr. Twining says, 'it seems all the mss. give *θαυμαστῶς*.' The sense of the context appears to call so loudly for the other meaning, that if all the printed copies and translators agreed, I should be tempted, *MEO PERICULO*, not to suffer one sigma to stand in my way, but read *θαυμαστῶ*. But besides the authority of the translators I have quoted, it appears from the Spanish edition of Flores, that *θαυμαστῶ* was the most popular reading. Since, he says, 'some editors (Algunas editores,) read *θαυμαστῶς* instead of *θαυμαστῶ*.'



and the bad, which he makes in Chap. XIII, the essential distinction between the double and the single story.

But here a much more essential difficulty occurs. Aristotle in the thirteenth chapter expressly declares, that 'a very bad man should not be represented as falling from happiness to misery, for though such an arrangement might be agreeable to our feelings, it would excite neither pity nor terror;' and consequently, according to Aristotle's precise definition of the word, would not be tragical. Yet here he gives absolutely and in unequivocal terms to this very arrangement of fable, the particular merit which he has before expressly denied it.

I can solve this difficulty into no other cause than change of opinion. And as I must think such a change of opinion justifies the proverb, 'Second thoughts are best;' I can impute it only to the triumph of feeling over hypothesis [Q].

Of vicious wisdom deceived, Sir Giles Overreach and Shylock are instances, as is the death of Dionysius by Euphrasia, of the unexpected overthrow of impious courage and power.

[Q] See Chap. XIII. Note III and VII.

NOTE



## NOTE VII.

AGATHO OBSERVES, IT IS PROBABLE FOR MANY THINGS TO  
HAPPEN WHICH SEEM IMPROBABLE.

THIS passage of Agatho is quoted by Aristotle in the second book of his Rhetoric, Chapter xxiv, where he treats largely of general and contingent probability, and the fallacious arguments that may be produced by confounding one with the other. The reason why Aristotle uses this argument now, is to justify his approbation of an arrangement of fable which is obviously against the general rules of probability. But experience tells us, that events happen every day contrary to general expectation, and as we are told by the highest authority, 'The battle is not always to the strong nor the race to the swift.' The probabilities as opposed to each other are distinguished into the [R] absolute and the contingent. Now the contingent probability is certainly credible; and the critic tells us afterwards that [s] impossibility, if the poet can render it even by sophistry credible, is preferable to incredible possibility.

By these means we may reconcile this with the strong inculcation of probability both as to incident and character, which we find in Chapters ix and xv. This contingent probability, as indeed every interesting tale can prove [T], is a proper foundation for a dramatic action or character.

[R] *Ἀπλῶς εἰκὸς, καὶ τὸ εἰκὸς.* RHET. L. II. C. XXIV.

[s] See Note VII. Chap. XXIV.

[T] See Mr. Twining, Note 156.



But the events of the action, and the behaviour of the character as exhibited in the course of the drama, must follow according to the rules of general probability. To illustrate this by an example, there is a contingent though not a general probability, that an armed leader attended by soldiers, may fall by the hand of a woman; therefore the catastrophe of the Grecian Daughter is no improper dramatic incident. Such an event supposed, the general probability is that it must be performed on a sudden, and unperceived, yet there is a contingent probability that a woman may vanquish a man in fair combat; but such an event would not follow naturally, either from the incidents of the fable or the character of Euphrafia, who is represented as a delicate woman and not as an Amazon.

The tragedy of the Fatal Marriage affords a stronger proof of the defect of this contingent probability. Nothing could be more probable than for such a villain as Carlos to seal his crimes by the murder of his brother, but that such an act should take effect exactly at the time it did when the characters are in the highest possible distress, is purely accidental, and is not the probable or even incidental consequence of the most truly tragic situation the characters are in. The escape of Iphigenia from the altar (incidentally probable according to the popular belief of Greece) was a very good incident on which to found a tragedy, but a very inartificial solution of plot [u].

[u] As in the Iphigenia in Aulis, and the Iphigenia in Tauris.



## NOTE VIII.

THE CHORUS OUGHT TO BE CONSIDERED AS ONE OF THE CHARACTERS OF THE DRAMA, AND BE DEEMED A PART OF THE WHOLE, AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE ACTION.

IT appears from this, that the dramatic writers, so early as the time of Aristotle, had found the chorus a dead weight, from which they wished to free themselves, and to render it a merely ornamental and adventitious part of the theatrical apparatus. [x] However I do not wonder at this precept of Aristotle. As the prejudice of the times would not suffer the total abolition of the chorus, or permit it to be entirely unconnected with the drama, every deviation from the custom of the best writers who made it an essential though subordinate part of it had a tendency to restore the exploded form of tragedy in its original state, from which it appears to have been at first raised in opposition [y] to general prejudice and superstition.

[x] Mr. Colman, in one of his notes on the Epistle to the Pisos, makes the following judicious observation. 'Neither of these two critics (Aristotle and Horace) have taken up the question (that is as to the intrinsic merit of the chorus) each of them giving directions for the proper conduct of the chorus, considered as an established and received part of tragedy.'

[y] See Note II. Chap. XII.



## NOTE IX.

INTRODUCING SONGS WHICH HAD NO CONNECTION WITH  
THE PIECE.

THESE extraneous songs which Aristotle calls Embolima, by no means want their counter-part on the present theatre. It is not uncommon to see it announced in the play-bills, that in such a part such a song will be introduced. In the Italian opera (I mean as exhibited in this country) so little is the drama regarded that two acts only are often performed to give more time for the dances.

A most ridiculous instance of these Embolima occurs in the English opera of Artaxerxes. The author, or rather the translator, took the opening chorus of Adriano in Siria, which happens to follow Artaserse in the works of Metastasio, for his finale, and consequently dressed a Persian king in all the attributes of a Roman emperor. [z]

[z] Adriano in Siria opens with this chorus,

Vivi a noi vivi all'impero  
Grande Augusto, e la tua fronte  
Su l'Oriente prigionero  
S'accostumi al sacro allora.

Of which, this translation is the finale of Artaxerxes.

Live to us, to empire live  
Great Augustus, long may'st thou  
From the subject East receive  
Laurel wreaths to grace thy brow.

See Andrews's Anecdotes, Article Errors, page 108.

C H A P.



## C H A P. XIX.

## NOTE I.

## THE LANGUAGE AND THE SENTIMENTS.

BY the first of these Aristotle means the simple and grammatical construction of speech, as is manifest from the succeeding chapter, and by the second the sense and intention that is declared by it. For in the sixth chapter he declares the sentiments, (*διάνοια*), to be ‘the means by which the intention or opinion of those who speak is discovered.’ ‘In short (to use the words of Mr. Harris) sentiment in this sense means little less than the universal subjects of our discourse.’

The modern drama considers sentiments in a more confined sense; and, as now used, it is properly enough defined by Lord Kaims, ‘the expression of a thought prompted by passion.’

Sentiments of this sort well applied so as to flatter the taste, the feelings, or the prejudices of the audience, are the surest traps for applause. In one of the critical papers either in the *Tatler*, *Guardian*, or *Spectator*, the virtue of a Roman theatre is exalted above our own, for the applause given to a virtuous sentiment, in one of [A] Terence’s comedies. Since

[A] ‘*Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto.*’

‘I am a man myself, and can think nothing indifferent to me that concerns human kind.’



I have known the theatre, I can answer for a British audience being to the full as virtuous as the citizens of Rome in this respect. This is so well known, both by poets and players, that our comedies abounded with these moral sentences to an excess, which became perfectly ridiculous: a very little exaggeration of which, by the masterly pen of Mr. Sheridan, has now in a great measure delivered the stage from their redundancy at least.

## NOTE II.

WHAT RELATES TO THE SENTIMENTS INDEED MAY RATHER  
BE REFERRED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF RHETORIC.

M. BATTEUX has given a sense to the whole passage, of which the above quotation is a part, directly opposite to that of the other interpreters, all of whom he accuses of having applied to oratory what related to tragedy, and vice versâ. I must confess I see no shadow of such a supposition; and think the general meaning of the whole conveyed very clearly in the exact words of Aristotle, as given in most of the printed editions; and which seems perfectly conformable with what is really the distinction between oratory and dramatic poetry. The critic first says, that sentiments belong most peculiarly to rhetoric; he then defines the nature and use of them, in raising and directing the feelings. Now he allows that the poet to work the same effect must employ the same means, such as amplification, extenuation, &c. but with this difference, that he must effect that by the incidents of the fable which the orator performs by the use of that application of speech which he terms sentiment; therefore sentiment belongs more essentially to rhetoric.

NOTE



## NOTE III.

FOR WHAT WOULD BE THE MERIT OF THE ORATOR IF THEY WERE TO APPEAR AFFECTING WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE OF HIS ELOQUENCE?

THE word which I have translated affecting, (*ἡδέα*, SWEET, literally,) has displeased most of the commentators, and certainly not without reason, if it can have no other meaning given it than pleasant or agreeable, expressive of sensations which it is far from the particular business of oratory, and still farther from that of tragedy to excite. But Horace, in a passage of his Epistle to the Pisos, which is plainly taken from this, and where he is speaking of the language of tragedy uses the very word of Aristotle, to signify that which [B] influences the passions strongly, a sense which the context has obliged the commentators to be unanimous in giving to *dulcia*.

‘Non satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia sunt,’

‘Et quocunque volunt animum auditoris agunto.’

Which I will venture thus to paraphrase,

Tis not enough that each fastidious eye

The drama's faultless structure can defy;

The moving tale must charm the raptured soul,

And as it lift the yielding sense controul.

[B] *Ψυχαγωγῆι*. See Poetic, Chap. vi. The only commentator who has given this sense to *ἡδέα*, is Segni. He translates it indeed *PIACEVOLI*; but he explains it in a note by ‘*elle possono muovere gli affetti*.’ See also Dacier's note on the lines of Horace that are quoted.



Shakespear apparently annexes some such idea to sweet, when he makes Jessica say,

• I am never merry when I hear sweet music.\*

#### NOTE IV.

THERE IS ONE PART OF THE THEORY OF ELOCUTION RELATING TO THE MODE OF EXPRESSION, WHICH PRINCIPALLY BELONGS TO THE PLAYER AND THE PROFESSED TEACHERS OF THAT ART; SUCH AS TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN SUPPLICATION, COMMAND, NARRATION, QUESTION, ANSWER, AND ANY OTHER CIRCUMSTANCE OF THE SAME KIND.

BOTH this precept, and the example by which it is illustrated, appear to me sufficiently clear. That there is no grammatical distinction between command and supplication, and that the distinction depends entirely on the speaker the most sacred part of our liturgy sufficiently evinces. A mark of interrogation added or omitted, will often entirely change the sense of a sentence, for an instance of which the reader is referred to the first chapter of this work [c].

As for the author's instructing the performers how to recite their works, it could only happen in the case of new pieces. The player of the tragedies of the three great tragic poets of Greece were as much obliged to tradition or their own ingenuity for giving the proper utterance to their sentiments, at the time Aristotle wrote, as the performers of the

[c] See Note [D]. Chap. I. on the translation.



plays of Shakespear are at the present hour. I question much even if the modern players would be quite so civil to a living poet in this respect as they are to Bayes in the rehearsal, or as the French players were to Voltaire [D]. I was present at the rehearsal of the Jealous Wife, and every circumstance relating to the elocution and the action of every character was directed by Mr. Garrick without one remonstrance from Mr. Colman who was present; though Mrs. Pritchard made several, but which were all over-ruled by the manager.

I do not think Mr. Twining has treated this part of the subject with his usual clearness. That by σχήματα λέξεως Aristotle must mean figures or forms of speech, I most perfectly agree with him. But when he says this belongs to the art of the player, and that no blame worthy of notice can be imputed to the poet on this account; it is clearly implied, that it is not only the duty of the player to understand how the poet uses these figures of speech, but to give them their due effect in the performance, by employing the proper gestures and tones of voice.

Yet though Aristotle says the blame incurred by the poet on this occasion is not of a serious essential kind, that very expression implies that some blame is incurred. And this is perfectly just. For certainly the poet ought to take care that these forms should be so marked by the sense as to leave no doubt in the mind of the actor or reader.

Of this fault Shakespear has been sometimes guilty. For instance, in the celebrated line of Othello, the proper delivery of which has been so much controverted.

[D] See Mr. Twining's Note 163.



‘ Put out the light and then put out the light.’  
Which I believe has been finally settled by Garrick to be thus pronounced,

‘ Put out the light and then.—Put out the light ?  
‘ If I quench thee,’ &c.

There is no doubt of this being the best mode, but much I think of its being the mode intended by Shakespear [E].

The subject of this note is well illustrated by Lessing. ‘ It is often,’ he says, ‘ very necessary in order to comprehend the nice touches of ‘ Terence to have the power of figuring to ourselves the action of the ‘ players, for the ancients never wrote [F] stage directions. Recitation ‘ had its peculiar artists; and as to the rest, the poets could depend on ‘ the skill and judgement of the actors who studied their employment ‘ with the most serious attention. The poets themselves were often ‘ among their number; [G] they gave directions how they would have

[E] Another passage of Shakespear has been thus spoken,

‘ This my hand will rather  
‘ The multitudinous sea incarnadine,  
‘ Making the green,—ONE red.’

I am surprised to see the compliment paid by Mr. Stevens to such a substitution of bombast, for the simple diction of Shakespear. The late Mr. Sheridan has pointed out many glaring though almost general errors in the reading of the Liturgy. For more observations on this subject, the reader is referred to Note v. Chap. xxv.

[F] See Note II. Chap. XII.

[G] That is, they explained their own meaning; depending on the art of the player to express that meaning to the spectators.

the



‘ the incidents performed ; and as their works were not published previously to the representation, before the people had an opportunity [H] both of seeing and hearing them, they had less occasion to interrupt the written dialogue by directions in parenthesis, through which the author in a manner makes himself one of the persons of the drama. But if we imagine that the ancient poets to avoid these parentheses marked in the dialogue itself, every movement, every gesture, every look, every modulation of voice that the actor should use, we are mistaken.

‘ In Terence alone there are many places in which nothing of all this is marked, and where, nevertheless, the true sense can only be discovered by guessing at the proper action which should accompany them. In many, even the words may appear to convey a meaning directly contrary to what the actor ought to express by his gestures.’

DRAMATURGIE, Part II. page 97.

[H] The same is the case now as to the priority of representation ; but the printed copies are read by thousands who could not see the drama performed.



## C H A P. XX.

**T**HOUGH I cannot see with what propriety Aristotle begins a direction for the choice of the language of tragedy, by sending us to the spelling-book: yet as I deemed it incumbent on me as a translator not to omit any thing that the critic says, I shall avail myself of the opportunity he has given me to introduce some general remarks on grammar, and some that relate more peculiarly to the grammar of our own language.

## NOTE I.

## A VOWEL.

IT seems very extraordinary, that while every art is in a progressive state of improvement, and that our mode of expressing clearly the meaning of language to the eye, both in writing and printing, is so much superior to that of the ancients from the use of stops, capital-letters, &c. that the means of painting sound to the eye should continue to be so very deficient and inaccurate. If the same character always expressed the same vowel sound, the true pronunciation of language would be as easily conveyed by writing as by speaking. But this is so far from being the case, that the vowel sounds marked by letters, are not only confounded with each other, but the same vowel sound when long and short, is hardly ever expressed by the same letter, though we have only five [A] charac-

[A] I consider Y (when a vowel) and I as the same, since they always have the same sound in the same situation; their distinct use relates solely to orthography, and has no relation with orthoepy.



ters to express all our vowel sounds. For example, the short sound of A, which when long is pronounced, as in BACON, MAJOR, is marked by E as in BEND, MEN. The short A as in MAN, has seldom I believe [B] a congenial long sound in our language but when it is followed by two consonants, as in MASTER, TASK, BARGE. However A, as in the first instance, may be considered beyond comparison as the most usual long sound of the vowel, either when lengthened by an E mute, as in BANE and DARE, or when independent of a succeeding consonant, (which case always makes the vowel long in English) as in BASON and MASON. Our long vowel sound of I has no correspondent short sound; but we use I to represent the short sound of E, as DEAN, DIN. Even if we should wish to express the short colloquial sound of BEEN to the eye, we must not write BEN, but BIN [C].

That our characters paint words and not sounds is obvious from the directions for pronouncing the vowels prefixed to the vocabulary printed at the end of Cook's Second Voyage to the South Seas. Or if that is not at hand, the hearing a child taught to spell, (the word DIVINATION for instance,) will be equally conclusive.

The Greek distinguished two of their long and short vowel sounds E and O by different characters, while the orientals contented themselves with only three characters, A, O, and I, to express all their vowel sounds; the two last of which were also used to express one an aspiration, and

[B] There are however exceptions, as FATHER, where the TH can be considered only as one consonant.

[C] This subject is treated more at large in Mitford's Essay on the Harmony of Language, Sect. III. page 32.



the other a consonant. The different sound of these vowels, and sometimes their total omission, when [d] very short are left to be supplied by the memory and judgment. When the Arabians under the Caliphs became a polite and learned people, they invented other marks to shew the nicer distinction of the vowel sounds where they were noticed, and to supply them where they were not.

This invention, adopted by the Jews, and afterwards sanctified by a little rabbinical mystery, and then strengthened by monkish superstition and papal authority, is the true history of those wonderful Hebrew vowel points, which have made so much noise, and created so many violent schisms in the learned world.

Perhaps some contrivance of this sort would be the best mode of giving our written language the most perfect precision as to its pronunciation, without any confusion as to the etymology of words, from which our irregular orthography in a great measure arises, and which is of the utmost consequence in a language like ours, whose words are drawn from so many different sources.

[D] WE are not very accurate in this case. I think there is not a very distinguishable difference between the first syllables of MYRTLE, HURTLE, CERTAIN.

NOTE



## NOTE III.

BY ACUTENESS, GRAVITY, OR THE MEDIUM BETWEEN BOTH.

I HAVE no doubt of Mr. Twining being in the right in supposing that Aristotle, by 'the medium between both,' (τῷ μέσῳ) did not mean the circumflex. His reasoning on this is conducive. It is very obvious that in every word of more than three syllables, or even in words of three syllables, whose first or last syllable is accented, other syllables are distinguished by a stronger accent than the contiguous ones, though in a less degree than that which is peculiarly emphatic, and which regulates the accent of the others, in our language at least, and in the pronunciation which we give to Greek and Latin.

There is no necessity to seek an illustration of this from the ancient languages, our own will afford sufficient examples which will have so much more weight, as our prosody is allowed to be essentially regulated by accent, which is indeed the sole efficient cause of our versification. It will appear from our verse, that this inferior accent has a force not only to distinguish itself in those syllables on which it is placed, but to answer the purpose of the strongest accent in the word as to the versification. There is no place in our heroic, or dramatic pentameter, in which 'undertake' would come in, that 'multiply' would not equally do, as to the measure; though it is obvious that the principal accent is on the first syllable in the one, and the last in the other [E]. In the burlesque

[E] For the sake of perspicuity I have distinguished the strongest accent by the acute, and the weaker by the grave mark.



drama of Crononhotonthologus, there is a character of the name of Äldiberòntephöscophórniä, which is a complete verse in itself, containing one principal accent, to which I have given the acute mark; one inferior to this, but more emphatic than the rest, which has the grave mark; and three others sufficiently distinguished from the others for the purposes of versification, which are noticed by a double dot.

This subject has led me unawares into an investigation in which I am much interested. I mean the distinction between accent and quantity. My Greek quotations will shew my opinion on this matter to the learned reader. To him therefore I owe some reason for adopting this side of the question, but to the mere English reader I am likewise bound not to employ too much of these notes on a subject which must be totally uninteresting to him. I shall confine myself therefore to two points only, and dispatch them both with as much brevity as possible. The arguments I use shall be drawn also from circumstances obvious to the senses, and appealing to them for support. The authority of antiquity, produced by Dr. Foster in his Essay on Greek Accent, and enforced and illustrated by Mr. Mitford in his Essay on the Harmony of Language, are and always must remain unanswered, because they are unanswerable.

First then, the authenticity of the Greek accentual marks have been proved beyond controversy by the abovementioned treatises; but the pronunciation of them, as it is managed by modern voices, destroys that cadence to which modern ears are accustomed [F]. In consequence of this

[F] Some persons I know talk of marking both accent and quantity in Greek verse. I pretend to no such power, but I am far from saying such a power did not exist among the Greeks.

they



they have been disused, and few Greek scholars from such disuse being able to write them accurately, it became necessary to get rid of them at any rate, and this was done by explaining away their utility when their authority was shewn to be unquestionable. They were to signify musical notation, tones unknown to the irreligious ears of the moderns; in short any thing but what we call accent. But if these kind of musical notes accompanied the common pronunciation of the Greek language; if, as is suggested by Lord Monboddo in his letter on this subject to Mr. Steel, 'In Greek a man raised his voice upon certain syllables and 'no other, whether he was speaking with passion or without passion, 'whether he was haranguing or in ordinary conversation;' if this were the case, the most perfect language we know must have been totally deprived of the power on which the force of poetry and oratory most essentially depends, that of exciting of the feelings of the hearer by congenial modulations of the speaker's voice. And if the ancients by *προσῳδία* and *ACCENTUS* did not mean what we call accent, which is so general a property of language, and so distinct from quantity, what word had they to express this property? for we cannot suppose their languages were without it.

This difficulty Dr. Beattie and Mr. Nares have tried to obviate by calling our accent *EMPHASIS*. But this is substituting the effect of a thing for the thing itself. A man in a red coat is eminently conspicuous among others in black or white, therefore one of the qualities of redness is conspicuity, but redness is not conspicuity itself, because there are other colors that are also comparatively conspicuous. So we know it is one of the properties of accent to make the syllable on which it falls emphatic, or conspicuous; but this property is not peculiar to accent, for, as will be shewn presently, there are cases in which accent cannot



cannot be so employed, and then quantity produces the same effect. Among monosyllables if it be necessary to make one word emphatic, or conspicuous, it is done by accent, and sometimes with the addition of quantity, or rather the emphatic accent changes the short vowel sound to a long one, when the voice is not stopped by a consonant. As in Milton.

‘ Know ye not ME ? ye knew me once, no mate

‘ For you, there fitting where YE durst not soar.’

Here in the first line, ME in the former part of the verse is emphatical, and supplies the place of an accented syllable where the verse requires one: the second ME is not emphatical, and is placed where the verse does not require an accent [G]; the vowel sound of the first is long also and the second short. In the second line the pronoun YE is emphatical, but the natural vowel sound of it is so short as not to be capable of the accent without altering its quantity, which is accordingly done, and the E lengthened, but without altering the accent as far as regards the structure of the verse. When it is required to make a particular syllable

[G] From this circumstance of the ductility of the accent, which is the essence of our versification, our poets have the power sometimes of regulating the proper expression of the thought by the cadence; an advantage denied the ancients from the inflexibility of quantity in Greek and Latin. Of this the first line of the quotation from Milton is an example. A passage in Thomson’s *Tancred and Sigismunda* will shew this more strongly from opposition.

— ‘ I will give

‘ This scatter’d will in fragment to the winds,

‘ Crush all who dare oppose me to the dust,

‘ And heap perdition on THEE.’

Here the reciter is under the necessity of either spoiling the sense, or the verse.

of



of a word of more syllables than one conspicuous, or emphatic, which is not accented, it is never allowed to alter the accent, therefore this is a case when quantity must be employed. This I shall illustrate by two examples from Pope.

‘ Curl’d or uncurl’d since locks will turn to grey.’

The syllable *un* is still considered as unaccented in the verse, and is only made conspicuous by the quantity, not by lengthening the vowel sound of *u*, for that the connected consonant forbids, but by marking more strongly the two following subsequent consonants by dividing them, and so rendering the length of the syllable by [H] position more conspicuous. In this line from Pope’s *Iliad* the length of the vowel is altered.

‘ Turns and returns him with a mother’s care.’

The affair of the accentual marks however, after all that has been said and proved in their favour, has been finally decided as things of much greater consequence are often decided, by the majority of votes; their pronunciation and even their notation, where detached pieces of

[H] In scanning ancient verse it is usual to say a vowel is long by position, but this is not correct, it is the syllable not the vowel that is lengthened. For as Mr. Mitford justly observes, ‘ Ten consonants would not oblige even a Greek or Roman voice to give to a preceding epsilon or omicron the sound of eta and omega, but two consonants distinctly pronounced will necessarily retard any voice in pronouncing the syllable.’ *ESSAY ON THE HARMONY OF LANGUAGE*, Sect. IV. p. 55. Double consonants we pronounce as single, and the only effect they have is shortening the preceding vowel sound, as *HOLY HOLLY*, *WRITING WRITTEN*, and as we carry the same pronunciation into the learned language, as in *καλος καλλος*, *fero ferre*, we always in this case make a false quantity. The ancients I suppose pronounced these double consonants distinctly like the modern Italians, which perhaps requires a greater delay of the voice than to distinguish between two different consonants.

Greek



Greek are quoted, are entirely disused; and this leads me to the second observation I proposed to make, which I shall introduce by this question. What have we substituted in their place? How do we now read Greek? I know the answer, and it will not be given without a contemptuous sneer at the ignorance of the querist and the absurdity of the query. According to quantity to be sure! the only essential constituent of the structure of ancient versification, and on which its cadence entirely depends. But let us enquire first what reading by quantity is, and if we really do it either in Greek or Latin verse. Do we mean by quantity what it only can properly mean, giving length to the syllables that are really long? (In syllables long by position we cannot err if we pronounce all the consonants distinctly,) or do we mean giving the acute accent to all long syllables? Now let us try this on the two first verses of the Iliad. Do not we give the sound of the eta to the epsilon in  $\Theta\epsilon\alpha$ , and do not we lay the accent also on the same short vowel in this word, and in the omicron in  $\text{Ουλομένην}$ ? The same in the first line of Virgil's Eclogues. Do we not pronounce the first syllable of TITYRUS as short as it is possible for a syllable to be pronounced? and do we not accent the first syllable of PATULÆ? Therefore if either of the abovementioned modes of reading be reading by quantity we follow neither of them, and if neither of these be what we mean by reading by quantity, I should like to know what is.

But though I do not know what reading by quantity is if it is not marking the true time of every syllable by the voice, I perfectly know what we substitute for the pronunciation of Greek according to the accentual marks, and CALL reading by quantity. It is in fact reading Greek according to rules of Latin accentuation, which naturally produces the same cadence that we find in Latin verse, depending entirely



tirely on accent; for though our judgment revolts at a false quantity our ear is much more offended by a misplaced accent, and the cadence of the verse is much more hurt by it [1].

That the rules of Greek and Latin accentuation were different we know from the authority of Quintillian. One of the canons of Latin accentuation is, that the accent of the penult in all polyfyllables depends on its quantity; and I challenge any, the most partial advocate for the modern mode of reading Greek, to shew me any other reason for laying the accent on the omicron instead of the epsilon, as directed by the accentual mark in the first word of the second verse of the Iliad. It does not even mend the accentual cadence of the verse, for in two lines that follow each other in Virgil's first eclogue,

— ' Ilius aram

' Sæpē tēnēr nostris ab ovilibus imbuit agnum.

' Illē mēās errare boves ut cernis, &c.'

The four first syllables are exactly, both in accent, quantity, and usual pronunciation, like *Ουλομένην*, pronounced according to the Greek accentual mark. Whence this mode of reading Greek has been called by way of eminence, and in opposition to the other, reading by quantity, it is perhaps not very difficult to discover. The whole system of Latin

[1] To those critics who are not satisfied of the truth of the accentual cadence of Latin verse being different from the quantity, I would recommend it first to read, and then scan any line of Virgil they chuse. This must convince their ear, but if they chuse authority rather than the testimony of their senses, I would advise them to read the conclusion of the eighth chapter of Dr. Foster's Treatise on Accent and Quantity, and especially the postscript to it; Mr. Harris's Philological Enquiries, Part II. Chap. II. and Col. Mitford's Essay, Sect. VI. See also Note IV. Chap. XXIV. of this commentary.



accentuation in every polysyllable depends on the quantity of the penult. Dissyllables have always the first syllable accented, whether long or short; and all the other accents of polysyllables, which are always on alternate syllables, depend on the accent, and consequently on the quantity of the penult. Therefore when we hear an error in the accent of this syllable, as it is the [K] only place where an erroneous quantity is marked in pronunciation, we directly censure the speaker for making a false quantity, and for this reason when we carry this mode of regulating the accent into another language, we use the same expression, and call it reading or pronouncing according to quantity. We can know nothing of the genuine pronunciation of ancient verse but from conjecture. I should imagine quantity was more marked, and accent less, in Greek than in Latin verse. How this was done we can no more judge than an Englishman who had learned to read and pronounced Italian like English could judge how it would sound from the mouth of a Tuscan. We must suppose Greek verse to be the natural poetic language of the country, and in this case quantity, the constituent of it, must have been strongly marked by the voice, and that, as in English and Italian verse, scanning was only an exaggerated expression of its real cadence. But this might not be the case with the Romans, who borrowed their rules of prosody from the Greeks. They might like the modern writers of Latin verse, while they regulated the quantity by the judgment, produce also an accentual modulation by the ear. When I see such a poet as Virgil uniformly employing what I know from classical authority to be

[K] Were I to say *SIDÉRIS* instead of *SÍDERIS*, I should be immediately accused of a false quantity, but not at all for giving the first syllable one of the shortest possible sounds and no accent, instead of the proper long vowel and the strong accent, by which it is distinguished in the nominative case *SIDUS*.

the



the genuine accentuation of his language, to produce a most delightful cadence, independent of the quantity, to which however he rigidly adheres, I cannot conceive it to be only accident, but that such accentual cadence must have been even essential to the beauty of the verse, especially as we find from the passage in the Philological Enquiries above cited (Note K) that when Latin began to be corrupted more attention was paid to this accentual cadence than to quantity. And does not this receive some support from the expression of Cicero quoted by Mr. Twining (note 5) that the poet was 'RATHER more confined by numbers than the orator.' 'Numeris adstrictior PAULO.' I certainly do not mean to insinuate that the quantity of syllables was not sufficiently obvious to the ears of the Romans; they certainly did not, like us, pronounce the first syllable of VELIM long, or of VELLE short, but that the versification of Latin depended more on accentual cadence than that of Greek, may I think be traced in the corruption of both. When quantity ceased to regulate Latin verse it still retained the accentual modification as the foundation of its cadence, as will appear from the lines of Commodianus, quoted Note III. Chap. XXII. But when the same thing happened to the Greek verse it entirely changed its form of versification, and adopted a new and barbarous cadence, which was regulated by the accentual marks, as in the Chiliad of Tzetzes. See PHILOLOGICAL INQUIRIES, Part II. Chap. II. That the cadence of Greek verse depended so much, (not on Latin accentuation surely) but on the strict attention to quantity, as in the recital almost to sink the power of the accents which was forcibly marked in the delivery of prose, is obvious from a passage quoted from another work of Aristotle in Note VIII. Chap. XXV.



I will now release my reader from a subject which, however interesting to myself, may be little so to him. Those to whom it is interesting I congratulate on a prospect at least of the subject being resumed, and treated of more at large than it has been already, by Col. Mitford.

### NOTE III.

**AN ARTICLE IS AN UNMEANING SOUND WHICH MARKS THE BEGINNING, THE END, OR SOME PARTICULAR DISTINCTION OF A SENTENCE.**

**HOW** an article can be said to mark the end of a sentence, is I own beyond my comprehension.

By the distinction of a sentence I imagine Aristotle means such words or phrases as are distinguished by an article, and by that distinction separated from the rest of the discourse, and in fact made substantives; as when we say, 'the conjunction AND,' 'the article THE.' In this power the Latin, for want of an article, is greatly deficient; and the critical writers in that language are sometimes obliged to have recourse to the Greek article; as for instance Goulston, in his paraphrase of a sentence in this treatise, uses *τὸ prius*, and *τὸ posterius*.

By means of the article in English a whole sentence is frequently made a substantive, as sometimes also a single gerund is. I say sometimes; as what Dr. Lowth has observed in his grammar, (p. 140) on the gerund being always a substantive when the article THE is prefixed to it, and requiring to be followed by the genitive case, I can by no means assent to. In some instances it certainly is so, but in nine out

of



of ten, when the article is prefixed, it is because the whole sentence, and not the gerund only, is the substantive. For instance, in the example in Lilly's Grammar of a sentence being the nominative case to a verb.

‘ Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes

‘ Emollit mores, nec finit esse feros.’

If we translate as we may [L], ‘ The having learned the liberal arts,’ surely were we to alter the tense of the infinitive from the preterite to the present, we should retain the same general sense and say, ‘ The learning the liberal arts,’ not ‘ The learning of the liberal arts.’

The gerund seems never to be properly a substantive but when the noun that it governs would be its nominative case if it continued a verb. To explain myself more clearly, were I to say, suppose speaking of a court of justice, such a thing happened before the swearing the evidence, meaning previous to the clerk of the court's administering the oath, SWEARING is a gerund governing EVIDENCE, and THE makes a substantive of the whole sentence. But were I to say, ‘ before the swearing of the evidence,’ I should conceive EVIDENCE as the governing case of the verb, which would not then be transitive but neuter, and express the act of the evidence and not of the officer of the court, and in this case it would indeed be a substantive.

In such expressions as ‘ the crowing of a cock,’ ‘ the neighing of a horse,’ the gerunds are completely changed into substantives, and as such will admit a plural.

[L] There is no doubt but in this as in several other of the instances, the article may be more elegantly omitted, but it is equally clear that it may also be prefixed, and in some cases must be prefixed, which is quite sufficient for the purpose.

‘ Steed



‘ Steed answers steed in high and boastful neighings.’  
 Or the English genitive, as ‘ a horse’s neighing.’ But whether I say  
 ‘ eating bread,’ or ‘ the eating of bread,’ ‘ EATING’ will neither admit  
 the plural, nor the English genitive.

The ‘ flying a kite’ is the diversion of a boy or the experiment of  
 an electrician. ‘ The flying of a kite’ is the motion of the machine, or  
 the action of the bird from which it is named. ‘ The carving a door’  
 is the act of the artist; ‘ the carving of a door’ the object of that act  
 completed.

Another proof that the word still continues a gerund without assuming  
 any of the characters of a substantive is the necessity of its being fol-  
 lowed by an infinitive, and its incapacity to govern another gerund.  
 We cannot say ‘ the desiring of seeing’ as we might the ‘ desire of  
 seeing,’ we must say ‘ the desiring to see.’

That the sentence and not the gerund is to be considered as the sub-  
 stantive, will be further proved from instances where the gerund is pre-  
 ceded by a noun in the English genitive case, or a pronoun possessive,  
 which equally with the article mark one or other of them to be a sub-  
 stantive. ‘ Peter’s denying Christ,’ would any correct writer say ‘ of  
 Christ?’ ‘ My reading a passage of Aristotle;’ Would you say ‘ of  
 a passage of Aristotle?’ if you do you change the sense. Reading  
 will indeed be a substantive, but will signify some alteration affecting the  
 sense, and not the pronunciation of the words.

Dr. Lowth mentions the use of CONTINUAL and CONTINUALLY,  
 the adjective and adverb as a criterion in this case. By that criterion I

am



am content that my hypothesis shall be tried. If the gerund can possibly be connected with an adjective, I give up my cause. 'He is continually teaching Paul.' Is 'the continually teaching Paul laudable?' Here the article is necessarily prefixed in the last member of the sentence; but it is said if THE is prefixed or must follow. Then must we say 'the continually teaching of Paul?' If we do the sense is entirely changed; or ceases to be a sign of the genitive case, and becomes a preposition, and would be rendered in Latin by 'de Paulo,' concerning, about Paul. If the adverb CONTINUALLY is made an adjective, and we say 'the continual teaching of Paul,' TEACHING will undoubtedly be a substantive, but Paul will be the teacher. Instead of 'the soundly beating a man,' could we say 'the sound beating of a man?' Or to take Dr. Lowth's own example, instead of 'by well observing which,' could we say, 'by the good observing of which?' for 'directly gaining wisdom,' could we say, 'the direct gaining of wisdom?' for 'easily supplying our wants,' 'the easy supplying of our wants?' for 'quietly enjoying,' 'the quiet enjoying?' It must be observed this is marked most strongly when WELL and GOOD are the examples, as in other cases the adjective and adverb are sometimes confounded by incorrect speakers.

I must however allow that the gerund, considered merely as such, may sometimes be followed by a genitive case on the authority of the Latin, whose grammar in doubtful cases is generally allowed to be decisive as to our own. For example: 'Aliquid fuit principium generandi animalium.' VARRO. 'Fuit exemplorum legendi potestas.' CICERO. 'Vestri adhortandi causa.' TACITUS.

— 'Generandi gloria mellis.'

VIRGIL.



## NOTE IV.

IN NAMES COMPOSED OF TWO WORDS WE NEVER CONCEIVE  
EITHER OF THE PARTS TAKEN SEPARATELY TO HAVE ANY  
MEANING.

THE same observation is just as to common nouns or names of things as well as persons if they are either of foreign or obsolete derivation [M]. And sometimes even if the words are compounded of terms in general use. This is well illustrated in Mr. Jackson's Letters. 'Perhaps,' (he says) 'it may be imagined that those words which carry their signification with them should be most expressive, whether long or short; that is when they are compounded of known words which express that signification. But this is not so; when we say "adieu," "farewell," we mean no more than a ceremony at parting. No one considers "adieu" as a recommendation to God, or "farewell" as a wish for happiness. Frequent use destroys all idea of derivation; but if we speak a compound or self-significant word that is not common, we perceive the derivation of it. Thus if a Londoner says "butter-milk," he has an idea of something composed of "butter" and "milk," but to an Irishman or Hollander it is as simple an idea as either of the words taken separately is to us.' LETTER III.

[M] See for example what is said of Curfew, Note IV. Chap. XIV.

NOTE



## NOTE V.

A CASE IS INCIDENT BOTH TO THE NOUN AND THE VERB.

AS much of the elegance and peculiarity of speech depends on the inflection of verbs, and as most languages in this respect deviate at times from what may be called the rules of universal grammar, I shall venture briefly to mention a few cursory observations that I have made on this point in the course of my reading.

Dr. Lowth has mentioned the confusion frequently made even by good writers, of the participle and preterite of such verbs as form the participle in EN, as 'wrote,' 'written,' 'rode,' 'ridden;' which has indeed been more carefully avoided, even in conversation by those who are tolerably accurate, since his admonition. But he has either overlooked, or neglected to mention the distinction custom has made as to the impropriety of using the preterite for the participle, in the different circumstance of its being connected with the auxiliary verb 'to have,' 'to be,' or being connected with a substantive as a verbal adjective. 'It is wrote' seems to convey a more ungrammatical sound to the ear than 'I have wrote;' but no person whatever would say, 'wrote language' for 'written language.'

This appears even in cases where the proper participle, as used with the auxiliary verbs, is nearly obsolete. It might favour a little of pedantry to say, in common conversation, 'I have beaten him,' 'I have eaten it;' but we always say 'weather-beaten,' 'moth-eaten.'



The two auxiliary verbs, 'shall' and 'will,' which constitute the future tense in English, are perpetually confounded not only by foreigners, but by the Scotch and Irish. The proper simple future is this, 'I shall,' 'Thou wilt,' or 'You will,' 'He will,' 'We shall,' 'You, or Ye will,' 'They will.' Were I to say 'I will go,' or 'You shall go,' it is no longer the simple future, but speaks determination in one instance, and command or compulsion in the other. What a difference between these expressions, 'I shall not succeed in this but you will,' and 'I will not succeed in this but you shall.' The last part is nonsense, since the verb 'succeed' being accidental requires only the simple future; but for 'succeed,' substitute 'attempt,' which is in the power of the agent, the simple future will be the same; but change the signs, say 'I will not attempt this, you shall;' and determination on one part, and command on the other are clearly expressed. On this principle it is that our neighbours often raise a laugh at their own expence, by telling us they will break their necks, and that their friends shall win a rubber at whist.

It seems very wonderful that two languages so very different, and in all apparent circumstances so entirely unconnected as the English and modern Greek, should unite in the singular circumstance of using the verb 'I will' for a sign of the future tense, the latter using θέλω for this purpose. A fanciful writer might perhaps be tempted to impute this corruption of the Greek tongue to the conversation of the Barangi, a body of English guards, to whom the particular defence of the Grecian Emperor's person was entrusted, and who preserved the use of their native language to the last age of the empire [o].

[o] See a quotation from Codinus in Note 48, on Chap. LV. of Mr. Gibbon's History.  
Πολυχρονίζῃσι οἱ Βάραγγοι κατὰ τῶν παλρίων γλῶσσαν αὐτῶν, ἢ τὸν Ἰγκληνισί.

There



There is a distinction in the passive voice of the ancient languages to which all the modern ones I have any knowledge of are strangers, I mean the perfect and imperfect present, AMATUS SUM and AMOR. This is observed by the later editor of Lilly's grammar; but AMO being the example it is not so clear, it not being very easy in that verb to mark the distinction, though by accurate investigation it may be traced. AMOR means simply, that at the present time I am beloved; AMATUS SUM has in this verb a kind of retrospect. It is the word Prior's Henry would have used to express his situation.

- ' When industry and time, (the mighty two
- ' That bring our wishes nearer to our view,)
- ' Made him perceive that the inclining fair
- ' Received his vows with no reluctant ear.'—

The distinction is more obvious in DOCEOR, which means 'I am now learning,' or 'in the act of being taught;' whereas DOCTUS SUM signifies the completion of my purpose, 'I am instructed.'

The same advantage that the Latin has over the English in the passive, the English in its turn has over the Latin in the active voice, from using the auxiliary, 'I am,' with the participle, 'I think, I am thinking.' In verbs deponent in Latin, the active voice has also the same advantage and from the same cause.

There is an anomaly in the Italian verb substantive exactly resembling the Latin deponent. It is conjugated by itself, assuming, as an auxiliary, the power of TO HAVE, SONO STATO, 'I have been.' The cause appears to be this. The Latin verb SUM having nothing like the



passive participle, its derivative the Italian borrowed one for the verb STARE; and SONO STATO literally means 'I AM PLACED.'

There is a remarkable nicety in Spanish between SER and ESTAR, the first always signifying only simple essence; as for instance, SER QUATRO LUGARES DI LONDRA, would not signify being four leagues distant from London; but being actually the four leagues, the proper verb here is ESTAR.

In some languages, the Hebrew for instance, the genders of the persons are signified by the termination of the verb itself. At first sight this may appear an advantage, but in fact it is a defect, for it often enforces discrimination where discrimination cannot be really made. What happens from this to the Hebrew in all its persons, happens to the French, Italian, and Spanish in the third person of both numbers, from the use of the pronoun. Here Greek and Latin have manifestly the advantage, as where discrimination is necessary they can employ the pronoun or nominative case, or otherwise, omit them. In the singular pronoun the English is in the same case with the other modern languages; and we feel an inconvenience when we wish to mention a circumstance relating to a person, whose sex we either do not know or wish to conceal; and we must either use a periphrasis, or have recourse to the colloquial barbarism of substituting the third person plural, 'They.'



## C H A P. XXI.

## NOTE I.

## DITHYRAMBIC POETS.

**Μεγαλιωῶν.** For my reason for rendering this inexplicable word as I have, the reader is referred to the note on the translation. Another conjectural emendation suggested by a learned friend, is to read *Μεγαλεσιῶν*. The Megalefian Games at Rome were consecrated to Cybele, and first introduced there during the second Punic war; they are mentioned by Livy, Tully, Ovid and Juvenal. None of the Grecian festivals mentioned by Potter are of this name, but it is obviously of Greek derivation. Livy derives it from *μεγάλης μηῆρος*, 'The great mother.' My friend, with great probability, supposes it compounded of *μεγάλα* 'great,' and *σεῖω* 'to shake,' an etymology perfectly consonant with the noisy rites by which the mother of the gods was celebrated, and with which the works of the Dithyrambic poets, and their high sounding expressions would be perfectly congenial [A].

The word in question, *Hermocaicoxanthus*, is evidently composed of the names of three rivers of Asia minor, the Hermus, the Caicus, and the Xanthus.

[A] Κορυβαλίσσειν μοι δακῶ περιβομβέμενος ὑφ' ὧν καλίσκιδάσας μῶν' ονομάτων.

LEXIPHANES.



## NOTE II.

NOUNS ARE EITHER PROPER OR FOREIGN, OR METAPHORICAL, OR ORNAMENTAL, OR INVENTED FOR THE PURPOSE, OR LENGTHENED, OR SHORTENED, OR CHANGED.

BY PROPER, Aristotle means words used in their common acceptation, as in plain conversation, in contradistinction to all the other modes he has mentioned, and not to the *γλῶττα* or foreign word only; though in his first example he opposes these to each other for the obvious reason he gives, of the same word partaking of both qualities, though with respect to different persons. This sort of foreign words introduced into poetry, did not resemble the ridiculous practice of those travelled coxcombs who are continually larding their conversation with French and Italian phrases; but, as is observed in the note on the translation, related only to the different dialects of Greece. We have nothing that resembles this so much as the introduction of such Scottish words as BOURN, EYNE, &c. which, to an English ear, has a very agreeable effect, and gives a kind of Doric simplicity to the lower kind of pastoral poetry. But this to a Scotchman has the same effect as our own provincial language would have to an Englishman. This however will in no case suit the higher walks of the drama and epopee. Had Scotland continued a separate kingdom the two dialects might have been distinct and of equal dignity, and have given our poets this source of variety. See BEATTIE ON LUDICROUS COMPOSITION, Chap. II. near the end.

The



The use of Metaphors is so frequent in common conversation as hardly to require explanation; such expressions as 'a cool reasoner,' 'a warm debater,' are examples. Sometimes even a word is more common in its metaphorical than its proper sense, as for instance, to RUMINATE. By a singular chance this word, though of no dignity in its figurative sense, acquires dignity in its proper sense, and is a perfect instance of the use of foreign words in elevating the style of poetry; as in Milton,

— 'Others fill'd with pasture gazing fat

' Or bedward RUMINATING.'

The example taken from Homer, of a ship to illustrate the transfer of a word from genus to species is sufficiently plain. We say commonly a ship lies at anchor from the quiet situation she is in when at anchor, which may be termed a species of lying still compared to the agitation of a voyage. The example of the change from species to genus (see the translation) is equally clear and still in common use, though we usually employ the modest term of a thousand; the Romans still more moderate, contented themselves with six hundred. On the same principle the absent lover counts his hours by centuries.

As for the transfer from species to species, however comfortably obscure the Greek examples are, I think the sense of the precept is sufficiently clear; it means, I conceive, the transfer of a figurative expression usually connected with one word, to another word to which it is not usually applied, though the meaning of it is the same. I esteem Castlevetro's example perfectly just; and agree with Mr. Twining in thinking any man who chuses MAY speak so, though I do not think it would be often advisable for him to avail himself of this liberty. I do not quote the Italian critic as our own learned countryman Martinus

Scriblerius



Scriblerius has furnished us with examples in his account of the figure Catachrefis, a master of which he tells us will say,

Mow the beard,

Shave the field,

Pin the plank,

Nail my sleeve.

In ludicrous composition this figure is of great use. The humour of low comedy and farce frequently depends on it. The sailor applies his sea-terms to all the objects of common life, the gardener talks of the first row of a regiment, and the soldier of a front rank of French-beans.

But this figure is not entirely banished from more serious composition. The pensive poet wanders

‘ O’er the dry smooth-SHAVEN green,’

and the hero of romance mows down squadrons with his enchanted sword. This figure is sometimes used in common speech, as when we say a warrior is PRODIGAL OF LIFE, or a spendthrift BLEEDS FREELY.

It must be allowed this mode of arranging figures comes so near the next, and the examples seem so applicable to both, that I am not able well to distinguish them. The particular instance given by Aristotle of the transfer of metaphor by analogy is very clear. Calling Beauty the arms of Venus, and Arms the ornament of Mars, exhibits a more familiar example.

In regard to calling a shield the cup of Mars, I must differ TOTO COELO from Piccolomini, who thinks the resemblance of the two things as to form,



form, can have any possible connection with the metaphor, and that it would be spoiled if lance were substituted for shield [B], because the form of the Greek *φιάλη*, or cup, bore some resemblance to a shield. This might have been the case with a poet who composed, as the Laputan philosopher proposed to converse, by things instead of words. But surely to one who uses the arbitrary symbols of things to express his thoughts instead of things themselves, resemblance of effect rather than resemblance of shape is the source of metaphor, and on this principle I should think the cup of Bacchus bore more analogy to an offensive than a defensive weapon. I never heard the metaphor in the second ode of Anacreon, where he makes female beauty serve both as a sword and a shield, blamed on this principle; but I never could fancy any resemblance, as to form, between a handsome woman and either of those instruments [C].

Calling a shield 'the wineless cup of Mars' is termed by Harles [D], 'a most daring metaphor.' Perhaps it will hardly seem so, if we take a more common instance, and call love 'the bloodless war of Venus.'

Of the ornamented word mentioned by Aristotle he takes no further notice. Metastasio supposes it explained in that paragraph of the Epistle to the Pisos which begins,

'Non ego inornata et dominantia verba solum,' &c.

[B] See Twining, Note 185.

[C] In some cases however too great a natural dissimilitude between the objects has a bad effect. See Note VII. Chap. XXII.

[D] See Note on the translation.



But whoever reads that whole passage must be convinced, that if *inornata* there is opposed to *κόσμος* here, *κόσμος* must comprehend every other species of ornament of which language is capable; all of which he has here classed with it, as being different modifications of exception to (*κύρια*), words in their proper and common form. Aristotle also at the end of the next chapter, again distinguishes *κόσμος* in this manner. He says such words are most calculated for Iambic verse as are most fit for common discourse of which it is an imitation, viz. the proper, the metaphorical, and the ornamented. Though from this we do not see what the critic meant by *κόσμος*, we see clearly that he did not mean by it either an assemblage of all the other ornaments of language, or any elevation or change of style much over-topping the modesty of common discourse.

Invented words can never be supposed to signify any arbitrary name that the poet may chuse to impose, but a name whose signification must, from derivation or some other cause, be sufficiently expressive of the sense it is intended to convey. Such, for instance, as *courser* for horse. Of lengthened names the Italian has many; but [E] Metastasio observes they cannot be introduced into serious works: in English poetry they are not uncommon; we use 'devoid' for 'void,' 'distain' for 'stain;' and Milton puts 'hermite' for 'hermit,' adding one syllable and lengthening a vowel. We also shorten words in verse, as 'morn,' 'eve,' 'mead.' Indeed all ellisions of vowels properly fall under this description.

There are other figures of speech not mentioned by the critic here, but which modern critics are full of, and which seem indeed, in fact, to

[E] Estrutto della Poetica, page 333.



be, what Mr. [F] Spence calls, peccadillos against grammar; but which the blind admirers of the ancients first give Greek names to, and then call figures of rhetoric. On this principle all the errors against grammatical precision [G] which are pointed out even in our best writers, may be converted into beauties.

Quintilian was however of a different opinion. [H] 'Every form will become a fault if it is not produced by choice but by accident, though it is often defended by authority, by time, and by custom.'

[F] See Essay on the Odyssey, p. 117.

[G] Maslef in his Hebrew Grammar, Chap. xxii. points out 102 instances of words of an anomalous form in the Hebrew Bible. Of these, from Dr. Kennicott's collation of mss. 78 appear to be errors of the transcribers or printers.

[H] *Effet enim omne schema vitium si non peteretur sed acciderit; verum auctoritate, vetustate, consuetudine, plerumque defenditur.*



## C H A P. XXII.

## NOTE I.

LANGUAGE WILL HAVE MORE DIGNITY AND BE FURTHER REMOVED FROM THE VULGAR IDIOM, BY THE USE OF UNCOMMON WORDS.

THE truth of this, as applicable to the Italian language, is very well illustrated by M. Maffei, in his defence of his tragedy of Merope against the criticisms of Voltaire, in which he shews the poverty of the French language in this respect. Voltaire had objected to Maffei, that in his tragedy, Merope to postpone the nuptials which were hastened by the tyrant, orders a servant to inform him, ‘ that the queen had had a fever all night.’ Maffei adds, ‘ To shew how such passages would displease at Paris, he ‘ translates this into French ; and in truth so translated, they have not a ‘ good effect : but this mode of confronting the tragedies deserves to be ‘ considered. The Italian says,

[A] “ Tis useless to disguise the mournful truth,  
“ A scorching fever wars against her life.”

‘ But the Frenchman says only, [B] “ It is impossible to conceal from  
“ you that the queen has a fever.” We may see here the difference be-  
‘ tween the verse of a nation which besides the language of prose pos-

[A] ‘ *Diffimulato in vano soffrè di febro affalto.*’

[B] ‘ *On ne peut vous cacher que la reine a la fièvre.*’

‘ *feffes*



‘ less also a poetical language. In ours even trivial and domestic  
 ‘ circumstances may be mentioned with dignity and poetically, but turn  
 ‘ them into prose and they instantly become common. Your verse has  
 ‘ exactly the same force as if I said in Italian, “ The queen has a fever,”  
 ‘ and a verse that began so would certainly occasion much laughter; but  
 ‘ when the sense is expressed as in the Italian, the transposition of the  
 ‘ words and the metaphor create poetry, and render the language noble  
 ‘ to our ears, because it is very remote from vulgar speech and yet not  
 ‘ extravagant; and by these means we are able to give ornament to every  
 ‘ thing.’

Our Shakespear has been criticized with exactly the same candour that  
 Maffei complains of.

## NOTE II.

## THE ELDER EUCLIDES.

MOST likely called so by Aristotle to distinguish him from a person  
 of the same name, who was a follower of Socrates and head of a sect of  
 philosophers [c].

It is surprizing that the English translators should have rendered  
 Εὐκλείδης ὁ ἀρχαῖος, Euclides ille antiquus, ‘ Old Euclid.’ In the first  
 place ‘ old,’ applied to a man, signifies age, not antiquity; and without the  
 article, as indeed is the fact with most adjectives except in the vocative  
 case, conveys the idea of jocular familiarity. Who for the elder Brutus

[c] See Fabricius.



would say, 'Old Brutus?' Were we to express the father of the Horatii by the name of Old Horace, we should immediately think of the Roman poet. We know the French, from the partiality they have for their own language, mutilate all the harmonious names of antiquity, a practice which we at first adopted but have now totally laid aside. In consequence however of its having been once adopted by us, the most familiar of the Roman names, and some few of the Greek names, have among us this pronunciation. But these are confined to the persons themselves, and not given to others of a similar name. We call none of the Horatii Horace but the poet, and none of the Tullii Tully except the orator. Aristotle and Euclid are two of the most early familiar Greek names, and in consequence of it retain this disgraceful distinction; and when we meet them thus mutilated we expect to find the fathers of logic and the mathematics. As all affectation is ridiculous, I should think it pedantic to call this work a translation of the Poetic of Aristoteles; but in a translation of Pindar's fifth Pythian Ode, I would not translate the *Ἀριστοτέλης* mentioned there, by the Anglo-Greek name of Aristotle. There is something so completely merry-andrewish in the appellation we give to the celebrated triumvir, especially when mixed with Roman names, that were I writing history I should be induced to restore him to the name of Marcus Antonius. In this work I have been obliged to retain those CHRISTIAN NAMES by which Shakespear and Dryden have mentioned him.



## NOTE III.

## MAKING IAMBIC VERSE EVEN IN COMMON DISCOURSE.

I CANNOT think the word *ἰαμβοποιήσας* can by any means be twisted into the general sense of, ridiculing, which many of the translators give it. For the reason which induced me to render it as I have, I refer to the note on the translation. I however must confess the examples are, by a little vitiation of quantity, much more easily susceptible of the cadence of hexameters than of iambs. Indeed they very much resemble the barbarous attempts at heroic verse, by Commodianus at the decline of Roman poetry, quoted by Mr. Harris in his *Philological Enquiries*, Part II. Chap. II.

Tōt rēum crīmīnībūs pārrīcīdūm qūoqūe fūtūrum

Ex aūctōrītātē vēstrā cōntūlīstīs īn īllum.

The prosodical marks shew what Mr. Harris imagined to be the intended quantities. But I rather think the writer's ear was directed by the [D] accentual cadence without any regard to quantity at all. Perhaps Aristotle had no iambic examples to quote, and the others being familiar, the *ῥίον* may imply, 'as in these spurious hexameters.'

[D] See Note II. Chap. XX.

NOTE



## NOTE IV.

AN ABSURD AND RIDICULOUS USE OF METAPHORS, FOREIGN WORDS, AND OTHER FORMS, WOULD HAVE THE SAME EFFECT.

THE observation of Aristotle as to the effect of all these ornamented expressions, and how much the propriety of the most elevated style depends on a temperate use of them, is obviously just and perfectly capable of illustration from our own writers of every description. There is no part of elocution which requires greater skill in the poet than the proper management of figures, and to steer between too ornamented and too simple a style; chusing one that shall be perspicuous without meanness, and elevated without being either turgid or obscure. Nor can any criterion be found for this, except the judgement and taste of the writer, since what in one species of writing would be simple might be mean in another; and that dignity of expression which may be only adequate to one subject might be truly ridiculous when applied to a different one [E]. It must be remembered that two sources of the burlesque arise from this impropriety carried to excess, either by making heroes and demi-gods talk in the language of common life, or making mean persons talk in the language of heroes and demi-gods.

[E] The modern writers of Latin run strongly into this. If a phrase is classical they are apt to think it sufficient without at all regarding its application to the subject, and will criticise a grammatical passage in all the flowers of eloquence. A curious instance of this occurs in Leusden's *Philologus Hebræo-Græcus*. Speaking of the scarceness of the copies of the Hebrew New Testament, he says, 'Vix careffimo pretio comparari possunt num plerumque in nuper incendio Londinienfi sunt Vulcano tradita.'



To know whether a word is proper for an elevated style, I believe verification the best criterion, and Aristotle seems to think so from the experiment he proposes. The expression quoted by [F] Dr. Beattie from our translation of the Bible, 'Sweeping with the besom of destruction,' would hardly bear this test.

It must be observed that in some cases, especially in scenes of horror, the effect is often heightened by chusing a common instead of an unusual word. In the following lines from Macbeth:

'Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
'Not bear the knife myself.'

The effect, contrary to the rule of Aristotle, would I think be much inferior if assassin could be substituted for murderer, and dagger for knife [G].

## NOTE

[F] Illustrations on Sublimity, p. 638.

[G] Mr. Stevens, on the occasion of Shakespear's use of the words BARE BODKIN, is at some trouble to shew us that bodkin was an old word for dagger. It may be so. But I think Shakespear did not use it here in this sense. His context seems to imply, Why should a man suffer misery here, when the most inconsiderable, and generally, harmless instrument, will set him free. What Shakespear observes here of misery he applies to guilt in K. John.

'Do but despair,  
'And if thou want'st a cord the smallest thread  
'That ever spider twisted from her womb  
'Will serve to strangle thee, a rush will be  
'A beam to hang thee on; or would'st thou drown thyself,  
'Put but a little water in a spoon  
'And it shall be as all the ocean  
'Enough to stifle such a villain up.'—



## NOTE V.

## BY PUTTING THE WORDS INTO VERSE.

I do not see any objection to the literal translation I have given of this passage, or why τὸ μέτρον may not retain the sense it seems obviously to have [H]. I have observed in the last note, that versification is no bad touchstone of proper elevation of style. Aristotle seems to be aware that it may be objected to him, that the language of poetry, verse, is sufficiently removed from common speech, to give it elevation without the assistance of figures. In consequence of this, anticipating the objection, he answers. Even in heroic verse, whose cadence is much more elevated than iambic verse, you will find an essential difference from the change of figurative, for common language; and then referring the objector to his own experience, he desires him, to put the words into verse, previously to the experiment, that the alteration may be shewn to arise from the change of the words, and not from the structure of the verse. He then naturally enough returns to that kind of verse with which he is more immediately concerned, and shews an instance of the dignity of a dramatic line depending entirely on the change of a single word.

And Cowley says afterwards in his Ode on Anacreon,

— ‘ In death’s hand a grape-stone proves

‘ As strong as thunder does in Jove’s.’

This passage in Shakespear may perhaps remind the learned reader of the instrument Œdipus employed to deprive himself of sight.

[H] See Mr. Twining’s note.

NOTE



## NOTE VI.

ARIPHRADES ALSO RIDICULES THE TRAGIC POETS FOR EMPLOYING FORMS OF LANGUAGE THAT ARE NOT USED IN COMMON CONVERSATION, AND INVERTING THE ORDER OF THE WORDS, THOUGH THEIR DIFFERING FROM COMMON USE IS THE VERY CIRCUMSTANCE THAT ELEVATES THE STYLE.

MUCH depends on the judgement of the poet in the proper regulation of this inversion of language. When judiciously managed it possesses in a high degree the requisite mentioned by Aristotle, of rendering the style elevated and yet perspicuous, provided the perspicuity is not injured by too bold a deviation from the usual forms of speech, which in the [1] modern languages, where the connection of the words in a sentence

[1] For a comparison between the French and Italian in this respect, see the defence of Maffei quoted in Note i. of this Chapter. Indeed the Italian is superior to all modern languages in this. For an instance in the translation of a passage in Horace by Metastasio, see Note v. Chap. xxvi. The arrangement of the words in the following stanza of Tasso cannot be imitated in any other modern European language.

“ Dio messagier mi manda; io ti rivelo  
 “ La sua mente in suo nome; ò quanta spene  
 “ Haver d’alta vittoria, ò quanto zelo  
 “ De l’hoste a te commessa hor ti conviene.”  
 ‘ Tacque, e sparito rivolò del cielo  
 ‘ A le parti più eccelse, e più ferene.  
 ‘ Resta Goffredo à i detti, à lo splendore  
 ‘ D’occhi abbagliato, attonito di core.’

GIERUS. DELIB. Canto I. Stanza xvii.



depends so much on juxta-position and where there is no distinction of case except in the pronouns, will often unavoidably create obscurity.

Mr. Jackson of Exeter [κ] objects to such transpositions as 'thunders the sky,' 'shakes the ground;' for 'the sky thunders,' 'the ground shakes;' in these cases he says, 'we are inclined to refer to some antecedent nominative.' I think for this reason the impropriety or propriety of such expression is clearly marked by the examples produced. When, as in the first instance, the verb is strictly neuter the deviation can occasion no ambiguity and is therefore allowable; but in the second instance where the verb has also a transitive sense, the inconvenience and ambiguity mentioned by Mr. Jackson will certainly arise.

In the use of this license, narrative poetry has a greater latitude than dramatic; but even there obscurity and doubt should be avoided. The effect of this arrangement of words in a verse may be seen in a line of Prior's *Henry and Emma*, where, without altering the essential cadence, the words may be placed in three different ways, two of which will have different meanings, and the third, which Prior has chosen, may be applied to either, and depends solely on the context and the stops [L] for precision. The line in question is,

'For seldom, archers say, thy arrows err;'

remove the first comma and it may mean,

'For archers seldom say, thy arrows err;'

and may be applied rather to the partiality of his companions than his skill. But the following arrangement puts the meaning of the poet beyond the reach of doubt,

[κ] Letter III.

[L] See Note IX. Chap. XXV.

'For



‘For archers say, thy arrows seldom err.’

In dramatic poetry, and all other poetry that is recited, if juxtaposition is too much violated, though the sense will be sufficiently obvious, it will be impossible to mark it well by the voice. The following passage of Shakespear will defy the powers of elocution to give it proper force.

‘Foul deeds will rise,  
‘Tho’ all the earth o’erwhelm them, to men’s eyes.’

For this reason Latin verse, however clear the whole sentence may be from the place of every word being clearly marked by the construction, can never be pronounced, by us at least, with energy; this occasions that monotony which the best reciters of it always fall into. How often does the whole force of a sentence depend on the connection of two words that relate to each other; but how can this be marked by the voice when they are in different parts of the sentence? as in this instance:

‘Pan etiam Arcadiâ mecum si judice certet.’  
‘Pan etiam Arcadiâ dicat se judice victum.’

Here certainly the force of the boast which arises from the poet’s challenging the god to a contest before judges the most partial in his favor, requires the connexion between ARCADIA and JUDICE to be particularly marked, which it is impossible for the voice to execute clearly, or to hinder the hearer of the last line from connecting SE and JUDICE in his mind, till he has perfectly convinced himself the speaker had been correct in the last vowel of Arcadia.

Greek verse though possessing the same powers, by no means exerts them in the same arbitrary manner. Virgil also, in the dramatic parts  
of



of his *Æneid*, has avoided this. In the speeches of Drances and Turnus all the emphatic epithets are closely connected with their substantives.

#### NOTE VII.

BUT THE GREATEST ART IS TO BE HAPPY IN FORMING METAPHORS, FOR THAT ALONE CANNOT BE ACQUIRED FROM OTHERS, BUT IS ITSELF A PROOF OF A GOOD NATURAL GENIUS.

THIS distinction of metaphor from the other forms is perfectly just. No particular praise will be given to the poet for the invention of any of the other modes of ornamenting language; it will be quite sufficient if he makes a judicious use of those already invented. But in regard to metaphors the same conduct will subject him to the imputation of plagiarism. For there is nothing that distinguishes original genius so much as the use of new and just metaphors, as there is nothing that betrays a want of it more than trite and common ones [L].

Many instances have been produced by the critics of confused metaphors where the relation is not kept up completely, as in the line of Horace, where he talks of bringing ILL TURNED verses to the ANVIL again [M].

[L] See Mr. Twining's note.

[M] 'Et male tornatos incudi reddere verus.'

For other instances of this sort, see *Elements of Criticism*, Chap. xx. Sect. vi.



Besides this obvious fault there are many other improprieties that may follow from an injudicious use of this figure.

The image may be ridiculous by being unfit for the subject. As in Addison's Essay on the Georgics, where while he is very justly praising the art of the poet in elevating his subject, he attempts, perhaps in imitation of Longinus, to copy the figurative style he is criticising, and says 'he breaks the clods, and tosses the dung about, with an air of 'gracefulness.' Now one of the most ridiculous of all possible objects would be a man's really doing this.

A metaphor pursued too far has also a very ridiculous effect; indeed this almost falls under the article of allegory, a species of writing which some people are very fond of, but which appears to me only a more laborious kind of riddle. Such is the allegorical description of the human body in the *Timæus* of Plato, drawn out to a length that is both tedious and disgusting: the hyperbolical praise of which by Longinus, and the imitation of it by Spenser, does no honor to the taste either of the [N] critic or the poet.

Sometimes a metaphor is perfectly incongruous and absurd, as in Cowley's *Davideis*, L. III. Goliath is described as large as the hill he is coming down.

'Vast as the hill down which he march'd he appear'd.'

This reminds one of the story in the *Connoisseur*, of the citizen, who shewing a map of London to a stranger, to enhance the grandeur of the

[N] See Longinus, Sect. xxxii. *Fairy Queen*, Book II. Canto ix.



metropolis, exclaims, 'Don't you see it is bigger than the map of  
'England?'

A metaphor also may be too near the truth, as in the line of Dryden.

'Men are but children of a larger growth.'

This falls under that figure which is now distinguished by the appellation of TRUEISM.

A metaphor also may possess properties that tend to make it directly contrary to the sense in which it is meant to be taken, as when King James I. advising the country gentlemen to live on their estates said, 'that in the country they were like ships in a river, and seemed large things, but in town they were like ships at sea, and made no figure at all [o].' Now though in this one point the resemblance holds, in every other circumstance it is exactly the reverse. Mr. Locke observes, 'that as  
'[P] wit is chiefly conversant in tracing resemblances, judgment is rather employed in finding differences.' I cannot say the truth of this strikes me. It seems equally the province of genius to find differences in things generally alike, and likeness in things generally different, and that it is the office of judgment to correct the errors or misrepresentations of fancy in both cases.

[o] This is rather a simile than a metaphor, but the propriety of each is derived from the same principles.

[P] Locke uses wit for genius here; in the subsequent quotation from Dr. Beattie it is taken in the more confined sense, which is now given it.

If,



If, as Dr. Beattie says, 'Wit arises from the discovery of minute relations and likenesses that had escaped the notice of others, and therefore a talent for it implies a habit of minute attention to circumstances and words, whereas a sublime genius directs his view chiefly to the great and more important phenomena of art and nature.' According to the definition of Aristotle we may call a metaphor a sublime piece of wit.

## NOTE VIII.

COMPOUNDED WORDS SUIT BEST WITH DITHYRAMBIC, FOREIGN WORDS WITH HEROIC, AND METAPHORS WITH IAMBIC VERSE.

OF the almost exclusive claim that the lyric poet lays to compounded epithets, every English reader must be sufficiently apprized. The dithyrambic poets of Greece seem to have made an ample use of this privilege, which it appears they carried sometimes to a ridiculous excess [Q]. Of the peculiar language of the epopee more will be said in the two next chapters. As for the language of the drama, the impassioned parts of it will hardly admit of any other ornament but the metaphor. This figure is almost inseparable from expression of violent feeling. So Lear, in the frenzy of his rage cries out,

- ' Tremble thou wretch
- ' That hast within thee undivulged crimes
- ' Unwhipp'd of justice; hide thee thou bloody hand,
- ' — Close pent up guilt,
- ' Rive your concealing continents, and cry
- ' These dreadful summoners grace.'

[Q] See Note I. Chap. XXI.



It would be endless to cite examples which every page of any good dramatic writer will afford us, as well as the natural language either of sorrow or rage, especially among the common people, who are most likely to speak the genuine language of nature. What are such words as 'my little jewel,' 'you beast,' &c. but metaphors?

Aristotle, in Chap. xxiv. objects to an ornamented style as injuring the effect of the impassioned parts even of the epopee [R]; but in the less interesting parts he recommends a splendid language. In this the dramatic poet is more confined. In the uninteresting parts he may indeed polish his versification, but he must not give his diction too much ornament, for such parts are only the common discourse of the characters, but in the epopee they are considered as the language of the poet, or if you will, of the muse.

But though simplicity of style, and precision of meaning, are peculiarly requisite to the dramatic muse, they are by no means to be neglected by her sisters. It is impossible that there can be any merit in writing or speaking so as not to be understood [s]. I do not make an exception even in favor of the lyric poet. The words of Pindar [T],

[R] See Note VIII. Chap. xxiv.

[s] 'To write obscurely requires no other talent or skill than to express one's meaning imperfectly; or if that is not enough to write without any meaning at all.' ARMSTRONG.

[T] Φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν, ἐς

Δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἑρμηνεύου

Χαρίζεαι.

'Whose meaning to the wise alone reveal'd

'Lie from the vulgar herd in mystic words conceal'd.'

adopted



adopted as a motto to one of his odes by Gray, though I believe perfectly understood by him, have been in general mistaken by his readers; and the sense they have been supposed to convey has misled many a modern Icarus who has tried to emulate the flight of the Theban swan. But they cannot certainly allude to defective construction, or ambiguous phrase, for who in that case would be the *σοφιστὴς*, the 'intelligent;' to whom such a composition would be particularly clear? Not the elegant and correct reader surely. Who is proverbially so good an interpreter of an ungrammatical or an ill spelt letter as the person who writes in the same way himself? By those parts which speaking only to the intelligent escape the grosser sense of the ignorant and are not to be comprehended by the common herd of readers without explanation, the poet must mean the nice touches, sudden transitions, and frequent allusions to the various fables contained in the mythology and early history of Greece, that so frequently occur in the odes of Pindar, which however striking to the informed reader, must be totally incomprehensible to the ignorant and uninformed, and the difficulty that may at first attend the developement of these passages will excite that sort of pleasure arising from a consciousness of acquiring a sort of knowledge, which Aristotle mentions in his fourth chapter.

Mr. Gray's incomparable Ode on the Destruction of the Welsh Bards will compleatly illustrate this to the English reader, and leave him neither in this or any other case to regret his inability to consult his Grecian archetype. This composition, though full of allusions that relate to the annals of England only, Mr. Gray found so unintelligible to the many, so 'much caviare to the million,' that he was obliged to step forth as his own interpreter, and print it with explanatory notes; and yet as Dr. Beattie



observes [u], ' It is in the allusions only, and not in the words or  
' images, (for these are most emphatical and picturesque) that the poem  
' partakes of obscurity, and even its allusions will hardly seem obscure  
' to those who are acquainted with the history of England.' To mark  
more strongly what I mean by obscurity of construction I will cite a  
passage from another, the most popular of Gray's works, his Elegy.

' Far from the madding crouds ignoble strife

' Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray.'

The obvious construction of the words conveys a sense diametrically  
opposite to that which, from the general tenor of the poem, and from  
that only, we discover to be intended by the poet.

The odes of Pindar must lose more than half their beauty even to  
the most accurate Greek scholar, for no modern can be so conversant  
with the numerous fables of Greece as not in many cases to be one of  
the ἀσυνετοί.

[u] Essay on Poetry and Music, Part II. Chap. I. Sect. III. See also his Essay on Imagination, page 167.



## C H A P. XXIII.

## NOTE I.

EVEN IN THE EPOEE THE FABLES SHOULD HAVE A DRAMATIC FORM, AND RELATE TO ONE ENTIRE AND COMPLEAT ACTION, WHICH HAS A BEGINNING, A MIDDLE, AND AN END.

IT has been already observed that in every fictitious tale, independently of technical rules, it is impossible to keep up the attention and interest of the piece without confining the time of the fable within a certain boundary. This rule of nature is confirmed by the practice of all our good novel writers. I will not only instance the novels of Fielding, who as being a scholar, and rather fond of shewing he was, may be supposed to display his acquaintance with the precepts of the Stagirite, or rather the models from whence they are drawn: but those of Richardson, of Mrs. Smith, and of Miss Burney, who cannot be supposed to be influenced by any pedantry of this kind. Even in those novels which are written on what Dr. Beattie calls the historical plan, such as *Peregrine Pickle* and *Roderick Random*, though they begin with the infancy of the hero, they by no means compleat his life. The first events are rather preparatory to, than part of the main object of the story, the body of which, or to speak dramatically, the plot, is the love of the principal characters, as the solution of it, or catastrophe, is their marriage [A].

The

[A] This is exactly true with regard to *Tom Jones*. The action properly begins with the banishment of Jones from Allworthy's house; and from that time to the conclusion, according



The mode used by the orientals to give a species of unity to their complicated fables is very singular. Of this the Arabian Nights exhibit a curious specimen. A general story, or ground-work for the whole, is first formed. This is the bloody vow of the sultan in consequence of the sultana's infidelity, the generous resolution of the vizir's daughter, and her final triumph. Into this the other stories are woven, but the introductory tale is continually brought to our recollection by the conversation that precedes the narrative of every night. Every story is besides branched out into a number of others, to each of which it serves as a common bond of union, as the original one is to the whole.

By this strange contrivance an appearance of general unity is kept up though without the least of that effect which is proposed as the consequence of unity; as the mind is disagreeably perplexed by the broken chain of the narrative, expectation is suspended till all interest in the fable is lost, and instead of perspicuity confusion is produced. This arrangement is preserved in the first half of Mr. Galland's translation. In the latter part he has given such separate stories as struck him, without dividing the nights, or preserving any connexion between them, except the catastrophe of the leading fable. Mr. Andrews in his Anecdotes [B], gives a humorous reason for M. Galland's change of conduct. But I believe the principal cause of it was the length of the original work, which he has greatly abridged, as will be apparent on comparing the number of nights in that part of his translation where they are

according to the author's own calculation, just forty-two days intervene, and yet this is five days more than the compleat action of the Iliad occupies.

[B] Appendix. Article AUTHOR.

noticed,



noticed [c], which is a full half of the work, with the compleat number of a thousand and one.

Dr. Beattie [d] seems to question the authenticity of this work. I think the reason he urges; (the French features given it by M. Galland,) can have no weight with a person who has ever read a French translation from any language. Whoever will compare this work even through the medium of a French translation with the many WESTERN oriental tales, to which it has given birth, will see strong marks of original and real character. But I believe the authenticity of this work is capable of stronger proof. I have been informed that Professor White has a compleat copy in Arabic. Mr. Richardson also, in his Arabic Grammar, has printed one of the fables at length in the original language, and quoted verses from another [e] which are not translated by M. Galland, though the tale from which they are taken is.

This mode of narration was adopted by Ariosto, and was copied from him by our countryman Spenser.

As for Ariosto, his imagination is so brilliant, his subject so wonderfully varied

‘ From grave to gay, from lively to severe:’

there is such a mingled vein of sublimity, pathos, and humour, running

[c] The last night noticed is the two hundred and thirty-second. Therefore half the translation is not a quarter of the original work.

[d] Essay on Fable and Romance, page 509.

[e] Page 181.

through.



through the whole work, that notwithstanding the many absurdities it contains, and such a total want of connexion in the incidents, that to enable the reader at all to follow the thread of the scattered tales, the commentators have been obliged to have recourse to inartificial assistance of marginal references ; yet we can hardly wish it to have been in any respect different from what it is. But as the work of Spenser is entirely of a serious cast, our taste is more fastidious, and indeed the attempt at uniformity, which is avowed by the author [F], causes us to be more disgusted both with the want of it in the Cantos that are preserved, and the apparent inadequacy of the whole plan proposed, had it been compleatly carried into execution. The unity produced by the introduction of a general kind of secondary hero pervading the whole, must have been very awkward and very uninteresting. Prince Arthur engaged as an assistant to the several allegorical heroes in their respective adventures, would have exactly resembled the pentathlète, as described by [G] Plato, who, however skilful he might be in the contest with those who like himself were trained to the practice of various exercises, was always inferior to those athletes who applied themselves to one only, in that peculiar exercise.

[F] Letter from the author to Sir Walter Raleigh.

[G] In his *Epasài*.



## NOTE II.

AND NOT FOLLOW THE CUSTOM OF HISTORY, WHERE IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO CONFINE THE SUBJECT TO ONE ACTION, BUT TO ONE PERIOD OF TIME, AND WHERE EVERY THING MAY BE INTRODUCED THAT HAPPENED IN THAT TIME.

THIS conduct of history is exactly exemplified in the work of that most entertaining of all writers Herodotus. Like Ariosto he hurries his reader from event to event, and from scene to scene, as his own lively fancy suggests, without giving him time to recollect himself, and fascinates him at the same time so agreeably with beauty of style, and variety of matter, that he has no wish to awaken from his delirium. [H] Later historians however have found unity, of subject at least, necessary to make their works agreeable; and this circumstance is the striking distinction between the historian and the annalist. History generally confines itself to the affairs of one country, and cotemporary events of other countries are never interwoven into the thread of the story, except such as may be connected with the principal subject. Writers of general history have a great difficulty to arrange their matter so as to produce any unity of design. The only method by which this is at all attainable is breaking their history into parts, each concluding with some memorable era or striking revolution, which all the preceding events may be conceived, in some degree, as instrumental in producing. A history of Greece, from the number of independent states, is subject to

[H] See Note I. Chap. VIII.



the same disadvantage. In producing unity here, Col. Mitford has succeeded wonderfully, as I augur he will when he comes to the increasing difficulties attending the divided interests of the successors of Alexander, where he will have no points of union like the superior states of Athens and Sparta to assist him. The Roman historian from Romulus to Constantine, has the double advantage of unity of story and concluding eras, arising, if I may use the poetical expression, both from action and manners. But the task Mr. Gibbon has executed is the most difficult one that ever employed the pen of an historian, and nothing but the voice of hypercriticism can censure him for not giving a unity to events of which they were utterly incapable. The history of Greece, however diversified in its course, has a great and striking catastrophe in becoming a Roman province; and the preceding events have a strong bond of union in treating of a people, however divided, still resembling each other in origin, in country, and in manners. But from the time of Constantine, the Roman history diverges from its common channel. The Grecian name appears again, mixes with, and almost overpowers it, till mingling with a thousand various and unconnected streams, it gradually loses itself in the vast ocean of modern history, in which that event, (the taking of Constantinople,) which is generally considered as the final period of the Roman empire, so far from being a decisive boundary, is a mere point that hardly attracts our observation.

Dr. Robertson saw the necessity of this historical unity so strongly, that he did not chuse to interweave the affairs of America with his History of Charles the Fifth, but reserved them for a separate work; a work, for the completion of which the public impatience is strongly excited, as the obstacle mentioned is entirely removed; and the history of  
British



British America may conclude with one of the greatest and most complete political revolutions to be found in the annals of mankind.

## NOTE III.

FOR AS THE SEA FIGHT AT SALAMIS, AND THE BATTLE WITH THE CARTHAGENIANS IN SICILY, THOUGH THEY HAPPENED AT THE SAME TIME, BY NO MEANS CONDUCTED TO THE SAME END; "SO ALSO EVEN IN PROGRESSIVE TIME, EVENTS MAY SOMETIMES BE CONNECTED WITH EACH OTHER, AND YET NO PARTICULAR COMMON CONSEQUENCES MAY ARISE FROM THEM."

THIS passage is passed over by all the translators and commentators that I have had an opportunity of consulting, as if it were not attended with any difficulty, but it appears to me totally irreconcilable both with itself and with the preceding sentence without allowing some latitude of conjecture. Aristotle observes that history differs from poetry in considering unity of time only without at all regarding unity of action: and that if two events happen at the same period of time, however unconnected they or the objects to which they relate may be, they have sufficient unity for the purpose of the historian: and this is well illustrated by the battles of Salamis and Sicily, both which, according to Herodotus, happened on the same day, and are mentioned by that historian in the same book, though they had not the most distant relation to each other. Here all would be perfectly clear, if the part between the inverted commas in the quotation that is at the head of this note, and which in the original commences with *ἐπεὶ καὶ*, and concludes with *τέλος*, were omitted, as Mr. Winstanley says it is in a ms. in the



Medicean library. But admitting this part as genuine, (which I think we ought from the authority of so many mss. and editions, against this single one,) the example so exactly in point with the observation seems introduced merely for the purpose of bringing in a sentence which is diametrically in opposition to it, and which it appears to me can be only reconciled with the context by supposing something prior to the quotation intervening in the original between ἀλλήλα and ὥσπερ, perhaps to this effect. That even successive and connected events may not always be sufficient for the purpose of the poet. And then all that follows is perfectly natural and explains the reason, which is afterwards completely illustrated by the examples from the lesser Iliad at the conclusion of the chapter, which though happening in successive time and connected with each other, had not yet that degree of unity which was requisite for an epic poem.

Mr. Twining has not translated this passage with his usual accuracy. 'So also in successive events we sometimes see one thing follow another without being CONNECTED TO IT BY SUCH RELATION.' However we may differ in opinion as to the reading of θάτερον μετὰ θάτερον, whether we conceive the preposition μετὰ as governing the genitive or [1] the accusative, still ἐξ ὧν ἐν ἑδὲν γίνεσθαι τέλος can never signify any relation between the successive events, but must mean some common consequence to arise from both. The sentence seems to imply, that if the events should be even so connected as to be proper for the beginning and middle of a poetic fable, they may yet be incapable of producing a proper end, a catastrophe conducive to the [κ] purpose of epic or tragic imitation.

[1] See note on the translation.

[κ] See Chapter VII. It is observable that Aristotle, at the beginning of this chapter, uses τέλος exactly in the same sense he does τελευτή in that.



## NOTE IV.

HE DID NOT EVEN ATTEMPT TO INCLUDE THE WHOLE

TROJAN WAR.

MR. ADDISON I believe thought he paid the Duke of Marlborough an hyperbolical compliment, when he called the transactions of the summer, in which the battle of Blenheim was fought,

‘An Iliad rising out of one campaign.’

When on examination the action of the Iliad takes up only forty-seven days.

Boffu has also calculated the duration of the action of the Odyffey and the Æneid. He fixes the former at fifty-eight days, and the latter at half a year.

It is impossible to apply these critical compasses to a poem whose action passes

‘Beyond the flaming bounds of space and time.’

It is obvious however that the Paradise Lost is confined within such a period, that the connection of the [L] beginning, the middle, and the end is easily comprehended; and that though the action is continued, it enters sufficiently into detail to be perfectly interesting [M].

[L] See Chap. VIII.

[M] See Note II. Chap. XXIV.



## NOTE V.

TAKING THEREFORE ONLY ONE PART FOR HIS SUBJECT, HE INTRODUCES ABUNDANCE OF EPISODES FROM THE OTHER PARTS.

FROM what is said by Aristotle in Chapter xvii. where he gives the plain story of the Iphigenia in Tauris, and the Odyfsey, it appears that he considers every thing as episode that is at all extraneous to the simple story. Every thing in short, that if either taken away or altered, would make no essential change in the principal event of the fable; and even the episode, he adds, should be nearly connected with the story, as he instances in the madness of Orestes. The same injunction as to the epopee is insinuated here, as the episodes of Homer are said to be taken from the events of the war, of which he brings the catalogue of the ships as an example. However Homer did not confine himself always to these congenial episodes as in the history of Bellerophon given by Glaucus in the sixth Iliad.

From what Aristotle says, and the examples he produces in both places, he seems to make this distinction between the dramatic and epic episode. That the first should be an event, though not essentially, yet closely connected with the story, and happening to one of the characters as the madness of Orestes, and not any detached circumstance, any interesting under-plot which in so short a composition as a tragedy would hurt the unity, and divide the interest of the fable. [N] But that the epopee from

[N] See Chap. xxvi.



its greater extent, to which variety was more necessary, and from its interest being less compressed, and in which so powerful an effect was not requisite, was indulged with a freer use of episodes, in themselves interesting, provided they were connected at all with the main subject; even so interesting as to form a proper basis for a tragedy. This however he does not propose so much as an addition to the excellencies of the epopee, as an indulgence allowed to its defects.

The *Paradise Lost* abounds with episodes, all of which are connected with the fable. The modern comic epopee affords examples of all sorts. The worst are those like the novels introduced in *Don Quixote*, such as [o] the 'Ill-timed Curiosity,' which Fielding has imitated in the story of, 'The Man of the Hill' in *Tom Jones*, and 'Paul and Leonard' in *Joseph Andrews*. These episodes exactly resemble the eastern arrangement of fable. The story of 'Cardenio and Lucinda' in *Don Quixote*, and still more 'Nightingale and Mrs. Miller's Daughter' in *Tom Jones*, are episodes connected with the fable. Perhaps the true criterion of the propriety of an epic episode is the possibility of the reader's passing it over without breaking, in the least degree, the chain of the narrative.

[o] IL CURIOSO IMPERTINENTE, which has been wisely rendered in English, THE CURIOUS IMPERTINENT.



## C H A P. XXIV.

## NOTE I.

THE ILIAD IS SIMPLE AND PATHETIC, THE ODYSSEY COMPLICATED AND FULL OF CHARACTERISTIC MANNERS.

BY simple, as Aristotle has already mentioned (Chap. X.), is meant without peripetia or discovery, which is strictly the character of the Iliad. The character also of pathetic which he gives it, taken in the same sense as it is in Chapter XI. when applied to tragedy, is exactly fitted to it, for it is replete with deaths, wounds, and other disastrous events. The Odyssey is complicated both from abounding in discoveries, as Aristotle particularly observes, and deriving its catastrophe from a very beautiful and affecting peripetia. I confess I do not see so strongly its superiority over the Iliad in point of manners. The Iliad is deservedly celebrated for nice discrimination of character, as nice perhaps as the rude and uniform way of life of the age would permit; and many of these strokes which characterize the manners, are also in the highest degree pathetic, using the word in its modern acceptation. Such, for instance, as the interview between Hector and Andromache, and the lamentation over the body of Hector, especially the speech of Helen [P].

However not only Aristotle, but even Homer himself characterizes the hero of the Odyssey as being versed in the manners of various na-

[P] See Note II. Chap. xv.



tions. Therefore though the delineation of character is strongly marked in the Iliad, and though in fact the anger of Achilles, which forms the ground-work of the poem, is rather a quality than an action; yet from the variety of scenes, nations and ranks of men described in the Odyssey, the manners themselves may be introduced oftener, and must be more diversified than in a work, whose scene of action is confined to a camp and a besieged city. Homer himself mentions variety as characteristic of the manners of the Odyssey.

But if the Odyssey [Q] does not appear to me so strongly distinguished from the Iliad in point of manners, as to make them a character of contradistinction; on the other hand I must again repeat what I have before observed [R], that I can by no means accede to the opinion of Longinus, as to the decided superiority of the Iliad over the Odyssey in general: though perhaps the Iliad may have some passages more strikingly sublime than any thing to be found in the Odyssey; and the Odyssey may in some places have carried the marvellous into the extreme. Yet surely in the conduct and interest of the fable, the Odyssey has infinitely the advantage; and, for this reason probably, it appears to have

[Q] It appears to have been at some time a doubt among the critics, whether the Iliad and Odyssey were the work of the same person; for in the edition of Homer by Villoison, which I have already mentioned in Note VII. on Chap. xv. near the conclusion, in one of the Scholia the mark  $\tau$  called διπλῇ καθαρά, besides the use there mentioned as assigned to it, is said to point out passages (probably in confutation) to those who ascribe the Iliad and Odyssey to different poets. Πρὸς τὰς λέγουσας μὴ εἶναι τὰ αὐτὰ ποιητὰς Ἰλιάδα καὶ Οδυσσεΐαν. So long ago as the year 1769, the late Dr. Hunter informed me, a friend of his was writing a treatise on this subject. I do not believe it has ever been made public.

[R] See Note IV. Chap. VI.



been the greater favorite of Aristotle who draws infinitely more examples from it in this work than from the Iliad, a mark of approbation that infinitely outweighs the censure of [s] Longinus.

It is not impossible that the subject of the Iliad might be more agreeable to the taste of Longinus, than the Odyssey, which is in fact a delineation of the private manners of the higher ranks of Greece, and therefore not so capable of the Sublime as the Iliad. One drew his characters as kings and warriors, the other as fathers, sons and husbands. I mean in general; there are beautiful deviations from the rule in both, and which receive additional beauty from being contrasted with the leading features of the respective poems.

[r] Pope has been much and justly blamed for altering the manners of Homer, from a false refinement which he borrowed from the French critics, while he abused them; and which, if the capricious taste of the

[s] I should hardly have made any excuse for this assertion, had not so elegant a critic as Mr. Hayley preferred Longinus to the Stagirite. I may be prejudiced perhaps, for it is impossible to separate our opinion of the doctrine, from that we have of the person who delivers it, but in this case I own I can form no comparison between an Attic writer, the immediate successor of Xenophon and Plato, and a semi-barbarian, even if an Athenian, as some assert, of the age of Aurelian, one of those

— Quos Græcia non suos alumnos

Agnovit in pejus ruentis ævi.

On this occasion I am almost tempted to adopt the strong distinction M. Lessing makes between the Greek and Roman writers; (Dramaturgie, Part II. page 132.) and say, 'It is not impossible that one may, for once only, have judged better than the other, but on the simple possibility it is what I would not believe in any case.'

[r] See Note I, Chap. xv. and Note IV, on this Chapter.

public



public at the time of his translation made necessary, a juster sense of propriety has now exploded. But this is carried so far in the *Odyssy* as to be perfectly absurd, and entirely to change the manners, and consequently the incidents (which are closely connected with them,) of the whole work. Pope all through the *Odyssy* represents Telemachus as not only having his substance wasted and his life attempted by the suitors, but as having his paternal throne usurped, though there is no idea of such a thing mentioned in the original, nor does Telemachus [u] ever complain of any other injury than the waste of his flocks and herds, and the riots in his house. That Ulysses was an elected and not an hereditary prince is obvious from the private situation of Laertes, who, had he been king, would hardly have given up the government to Ulysses before or during the siege of Troy. He is not at the return of Ulysses so old as to be unable to bear arms and even kill an armed warrior with his spear; and the time of the absence of Ulysses was twenty years. In the second Book of the *Odyssy*, when Telemachus appeals to the assembly of the chiefs, Pope tells us, when he came

‘ His father’s throne he fill’d, while distant stood  
 ‘ The hoary peers and aged wisdom bow’d;

and when he rose ‘ majestic’ to speak

‘ His royal hand th’ imperial sceptre sway’d.’

[u] In the first book of the *Odyssy*, Antinous mentions the hereditary right of Telemachus to the monarchy in a taunting manner. Telemachus in answer, disclaims any exclusive right to the succession of the government, but asserts his right to his father’s property, both which are confirmed by Eurymachus. It is curious to see how completely Pope has misrepresented this, both in his translation and note upon it.



This is exactly a prince regent in the house of lords; but the original only says, [x] that he sat in his father's seat and the elders gave way to him, as seems natural both out of respect to his birth and because it was at his desire they met, and consequently he was to declare his cause of complaint to them. And as for the imperial sceptre it was no more than an ensign of oratory which [y] the herald used to put in the hands of all public speakers when they addressed a large assembly.

- [z] ‘ On seats of stone within the sacred place,  
 ‘ The rev'rend elders judged the dubious case  
 ‘ Alternate; each th' attesting sceptre took,  
 ‘ And rising solemn each his sentence spoke.’

The constant repetition of court and palace, is in the same style; but the continual appellation of the prince, which is given to Telemachus, is

[x] Εἴζετο δ' ἐν πατρὸς θώκῳ ἔϊξαν δὲ γέροντες. But though hereditary succession to regal authority was no claim as clearly appears, I think from the whole story of the Odyssey, it seems clearly to have been the general practice in Greece during the era of the Trojan war.

[y] ——— Σκῆπτρον δὲ οἱ ἐμβαλε χεῖρὶ.  
 Κήρυξ Πεισήνωρ. ———

[z] See Iliad Book XVIII. v. 504. in the original; 585 in Pope. I have altered the second line which is translated without the least authority from Homer,

‘ The rev'rend elders NODDED O'ER THE case.’

The meaning of this passage seems to have been universally mistaken; the obvious meaning is that given by Col. Mitford in his history of Greece. See Chap. III. Sect. II. who supposes the talents of gold to be the object of the litigation not the reward of the judge, and that the speakers pleaded, not judged alternately, ἀμοιβῆς δ' ἐδίκαζον. Δικάζομαι, in the middle voice has this sense. Though I cannot recollect another instance of its being used in this sense in the active voice, it seems so obviously necessary here, that I am inclined to consider this as one.

a master-



a master-piece of absurdity. Prince in its general acceptation is equivalent with king; in the appropriated language of modern etiquette, it may be called the second title of a king, which is bestowed on his eldest son, to whom, with the article *THE* prefixed it peculiarly belongs. But it is fully as absurd to give this title to the son even of a Greek hereditary monarch, as it would have been in Shakespear, who, following our older writers, made Theseus, Duke of Athens, to have called his son, had he introduced him in his drama the Marquis, a fault that has been really committed by Beaumont and Fletcher in their tragedy of *Cupid's Revenge*. But we cannot wonder at any absurdity in writers, who make Demetrius Poliorcetes fire [A] a pistol. This title given to Telemachus, reminds me of a circumstance I have met with in some novel, where an African prince is introduced to an affected and ignorant woman, who asks him if he is Prince of Wales in his own country, or only one of the younger princes.

In all interesting narrations where manners are strongly painted, the poet should be particularly careful not to blend them too much with the affecting parts. This is more particularly to be attended to in the comic epopee where manners are drawn with a bolder hand, and their tendency is frequently such as must counteract the affecting parts of the action. Miss Burney, who is second to none in just and well-discriminated portraits of life and manners, runs a little into this fault in her novel of *Cecilia*. When the heroine is on the road to meet Delville in London and be privately married to him, we are too much interested in her situation to attend to the conversation of the group that embarrasses her on

[A] See Note I. Chap. XII. There is a print by Rembrandt of Tobit, where the scene is laid in a Flemish kitchen, with dried herrings hanging in a great chimney corner.



the way. The same may be partly said of the Vauxhall scene, but more strongly of the scene between Hopson and Cecilia immediately preceding her terrible interview with Delville, which brings on the catastrophe. This mixture of exceedingly well drawn comic character, with the strongest force of tragic situation, must contribute in great measure to weaken the effect of both. Fielding has avoided this in his novel of Tom Jones. He introduces no striking delineation of character from the time of his imprisonment till the final discovery. The manners in Joseph Andrews are highly colored till the conclusion, but then it contains no deep distress. Richardson was the most unequal drawer of character imaginable. Mr. Greville has painted this painter of manners with such lively and just traits, that I trust I shall be forgiven for inserting a sketch of the picture. 'He is in many particulars the most minute, fine, delicate observer of human nature I ever met with, the most refined and just in his sentiments; but he often carries that refinement into puerility, and that justness into tastelessness. He not only enters upon those beautiful and touching distinctions which the gross conceptions of most men are incapable of discerning, but he also falls upon all the trivial silly circumstances of society which can have attractions only for the nursery. His understanding seems to be hampered and confined; it wants enlargement, freedom, or to say all in one word, taste. His men of the world are strange debauchees, his women outrageously OUTRE'ES both in good and bad qualities [B].'

I cannot quit a note which began with a comparison between the epopees of Homer, without taking notice of another which has been often compared with them, and strange to tell, often preferred to them.

[B] Greville's Maxims, 3d edit. page 51.



I mean the *Æneid*. I must say I am astonished how such a comparison could ever have existed. Originality and invention are the soul of poetry; and Virgil, in his *Æneid*, has no more pretensions to these than Pope has in his translation. It is true he has frequently ornamented the simplicity of the old bard, and perhaps sometimes with advantage, but certainly oftener with a contrary effect, and so has our countryman. And I confess I think in general, the more Virgil has deviated from his archetype the more he has deviated from excellence. What? I may be asked, do you wish, instead of writing the *Æneid*, he had translated the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*? I am much inclined to answer, Yes. And I think where Pope has given the sense of his original unsophisticated, his poem has a more original air than the *Æneid*. The great difference between Homer and Virgil consists in this, and it is in fact all the difference between poetical excellence and mediocrity; Homer described what he had seen; he combined incidents which he knew were founded on truth and nature; he painted manners which were real; he used machinery, the existence of which he believed; he was the Shakespear of Greece, with the advantage of writing in the most perfect language, [M] in its highest state of refinement, and with the most harmonious versification imaginable. An advantage never enjoyed by any other poet. For, except Homer, no writer has lived at a period which at the same time furnished manners and incidents best calculated for poetical imitation, and a language at the same time at its highest state of perfection, and capable of every degree of poetical ornament.

[M] Greek verse received no additional ornament after Homer. The latest Greek poets, to the time of Oppian, attempted neither innovation or improvement; they tried no other road to excellence in poetry than what the great master of the art had pointed out to them. See Note IV. on this chapter.



In this last advantage Virgil was indulged : he wrote in the happiest era of the Roman language, and of that era his style was the purest. The only difference between the two poets in this respect lies in the superiority of the Greek language, and its more natural versification [N]. But in the other respects his inferiority was great indeed. The manners at Rome were as little natural in the Augustan age as they are now at London or Paris. The wars of the time were not directed by the private passions of individuals ; they were the wars of political ambition. In such wars nothing is interesting or picturesque. He was obliged to describe incidents he never saw, paint manners he was not conversant with, and introduce machinery, the existence of which was generally disbelieved by himself, and all the higher ranks of his contemporaries. In consequence of these circumstances, every deviation from his archetype is a deviation from truth and nature. In imitating things in which he had no other guide to direct him than Homer, when he quitted that guide he must go wrong ; and had he imitated scenes familiar to him they would have been as ill fitted for the epopee as the subject of the *Henriade*. Of what Virgil could do when he had a subject familiar to himself, and proper for poetry, though of an inferior kind, the divine *Georgic* will be an eternal monument. Yet, beautiful as the episode of *Eurydice* is, I cannot think the fourth book of the *Georgic* equal to the

[N] See Note VI. Chap. XXII. But whatever might be the inferiority of Latin to Greek verse is repaid by the superiority of Latin to Greek oratory. If Greek is the natural language of poetry, Latin is the ornamented language of eloquence. When Longinus hesitates which to prefer, Demosthenes or Cicero, his real decision is apparent. For what Dr. Johnson has said of our northern fellow countrymen may with greater propriety be said, especially in matters of literature, of the countrymen of Longinus. ‘ A Greek must be a very sturdy moralist who did not love Greece better than truth.’ I however confine this to literary rather than political vanity. See Note VI. on this chapter.

others.



others. The three first books must please, from their views of general nature, but surely the battles and internal government of bees is not very interesting in a poetical light. I know the commentators talk of an ascending scale in the four books, from corn and grass, to trees, to animated nature, and the mimic actions of men, and which, in the last instance particularly, is strongly enforced by Mr. Harris, in his *Philological Enquiries*, page 123. I confess this account of the bees seems to me very congenial with that species of the burlesque which is derived from dressing mean objects in pompous words, it reminds me of the *Batrachomyomachia* of Homer [o].

[P] As a proof of the simplicity of the times described by Homer, it is a great doubt if his kings and heroes could write or read; at least when the Grecian leaders cast lots who shall engage Hector in single combat, in the seventh Iliad they only make their marks, for when the lot signed by Ajax falls out of the helmet, and is carried round by the herald, none of the chiefs know to whom it belongs till it is brought to Ajax himself.

[o] Dr. Johnson says, (See BOSWELL'S LIFE, Vol. II. p. 454.) 'The Georgics did not give me so much pleasure as the *Æneid*, EXCEPT THE FOURTH BOOK.' An instance of his predilection for description of political society, beyond the beauties of nature.

[P] The probability that Homer lived much nearer the times he described than is usually supposed has been shewn by Mr. Mitford with as much clearness as so distant an event is capable of. See MITFORD'S HISTORY OF GREECE, Appendix to Chap. IV.



## NOTE II.

THE PROPER LENGTH OF THE EPOPEE HAS BEEN ALREADY MENTIONED; THERE SHOULD BE A POSSIBILITY OF COMPREHENDING THE BEGINNING AND END IN ONE VIEW, WHICH WOULD BE ATTAINED IF IT WERE A LITTLE SHORTER THAN THE COMPOSITIONS OF THE EARLIER POETS, AND REDUCED TO THE SAME LENGTH WITH THE NUMBER OF TRAGEDIES THAT ARE PERFORMED AT ONE TIME.

I CONFESS that, in the first edition of my translation, I followed the opinion of Dacier in understanding this passage as censuring other epic poets for the too great length of their poems, and recommending Homer's epopees as the standard in this respect. But Mr. Twining's arguments in favor of the contrary opinion are so conclusive to me, that I have, without any hesitation, abandoned my former hypothesis to adopt his. It appears clearly, both from the authorities he cites and his own reasoning, that four tragedies were the most that could be supposed to be performed at one sitting, and which would certainly be now more than sufficient to wear out the patience of the most unwearied admirer of the drama [Q]. And to read a poem of that length without intermission, though it would not take up so much time as the repre-

[Q] Mr. Twining has shewn that the spectators took refreshment during this long representation. It appears that this practice, which is still continued at Sadler's Wells, was the general custom of the old English theatre, where the audience were regaled with tobacco, wine and beer. See a passage from PRYNNE'S HISTRIOMASTRIA, page 322, cited by Mr. Stevens, in his ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN OF THE ENGLISH STAGE.



sentation of a drama, would I believe, however interesting, never be performed for pleasure only [R], and yet this continued attention must be the point of coincidence to which Aristotle would bring the drama and the epopee [S]. Mr. Twining has also confuted me on my own principles. I have supposed it improbable that Aristotle, who has been in this chapter so lavish of his praises of that poet in express terms, should here censure a part of his conduct by a kind of indirect implication. But Mr. Twining very properly asks, 'Had Aristotle meant to except Homer, why not expressly name him? Gladly as he appears to seize every opportunity of giving the poet his just praise, would he not here also have opposed his conduct to that of other poets as he has done in so many other instances? Or why indeed refer us to the number of tragedies successively performed in one day, when he might as well have referred at once to the Iliad or the Odyssey.'

This same reasoning may be applied to all works of narrative imitation. Richardson's Grandison and Clarissa are much too long. Perhaps Tom Jones falls a little under this predicament. What shall we say then of the Clelias and Parthenissas, those voluminous romances of the last age, whose perusal would furnish six months employment to the application of the reader?

The epopee from the nature of its mode of imitation, as is well shewn by the Stagirite in this chapter, independent of any rules of art, has a

[R] Dacier says, that sometimes sixteen tragedies were performed in succession, which would have taken up thirty-two hours, allowing only two hours for each tragedy. He says also the Iliad might be read through in a day. So it might for a wager. See Mr. Twining's note.

[S] See Note III. Chap. XXVI.



much larger scope and richer materials for extending its bulk than can with the greatest indulgence be possibly allowed to the drama. 'The 'epopee,' (to use the words of Metastasio, which are a sort of paraphrase of those of Aristotle) 'has as it were the whole world for its 'theatre, and is enabled by narration to avail itself as its material of 'what different people do at the same time in different places.' With the drama it is far otherwise. The latter advantage it is impossible it can attempt without utter absurdity; and a plan equally extensive with the epopee is beyond its powers. [T] I have in another place vindicated Shakespear for his deviation from the local laws of the Greek drama; but though I acknowledge myself an admirer almost to idolatry of his excellencies, I cannot bring myself to idolize his faults. That he errs frequently against the general rules on which dramatic probability can alone be founded, it is impossible to deny, and we can only say in his justification what Aristotle said of the improbabilities in the *Odyssæy*, 'Though such faults would be intolerable in an inferior 'writer, they are here almost lost amidst the lustre of surrounding beauties.' Yet nevertheless they are faults, and as such should, if possible, be avoided. But the epic plan has its boundaries, as well as the actual length of the poem itself. Interest can only be excited by entering into detail. It is not sufficient to mention only, an affecting incident; the poet, if he would influence the passions of his readers, must describe the circumstances particularly; he must not only, to use the words of Aristotle in another part of this work [U], conduct his imitation well, but dramatically. The natural boundaries of the real length of the poem, and length of plan are mutually dependant on each other. If the poem is itself too long, the story, however drawn out in detail, will

[T] See Note III. Chap. v..

[U] Chapter IV..

certainly



certainly incur the fault of not having the beginning, the middle, and the end, the necessary connexion of one part on the other, easily comprehended by the memory; and if a proper length as to the real bulk of the poem is chosen, and a plan is formed of too great an extent, one of two defects must arise from it. Either the events and situations must be so slightly touched on, as to lose their interest, or if the most interesting parts are sufficiently detailed, there will be a want of uniformity that will disgust, the story will be broken into parts, and the idea of the length of time will be confused in the mind of the reader.

It must be remembered, that the real natural unity of time, as well as that of place depending upon it, are equally limited by natural probability in the epopee and the drama. If the precise time of an event in the epopee is marked by any circumstance of the action, probability is essentially violated, if more events are crowded into that time than could really happen in it. And if in a comedy that takes up only four hours the same person should not be in London and Bath, or in a tragedy, the action of which takes up twenty-four hours, he should not be seen at Rome and at Athens; so in an epopee, which takes up forty days, he should not in the course [x] of the action be in England and the East-Indies.

To this circumstance being strongly pointed out by nature, we must impute that general regard paid to it, even by indifferent novel writers, which has been noticed in the first note on the preceding chapter: and which has been made still more necessary by the mode, now

[x] In the *Odyssæy* the narrative of Ulysses to Alcinous, and that of Æneas to Dido, are out of the action. See BOSSU, L. III. Chap. XI.



almost universally adopted, of throwing the narrative into correspondence, which enforces a continuity of action, with more than dramatic precision. We are less disgusted at the interval of sixteen years that elapses between the third and fourth acts of the *Winter's Tale* than we should at a twelfth part of that time interrupting an epistolary novel. The *Winter's Tale* is in fact composed of two distinct dramas, one the sequel of the other; and in the last there are several new characters [y]. But the correspondents of the novel have the property of the ancient chorus, in keeping the action always before our eyes. For we can never suppose all the persons to drop their correspondence while one of the principal characters acquires a fortune in the East Indies, however rapidly it may occasionally have been done there. The only resource the author has in this case is to step forth in propria persona, and tell his readers that as nothing very interesting happened in that time he has suppressed the correspondence [z].

Though the epopee, from the action not being immediately before the eyes, has in most respects a greater latitude of indulgence than the drama [A], yet in point of detail it must be much inferior. By detail the events of two hours may be drawn out into a hundred pages, nay a thousand when the actual length of the work is unlimited; and as we always calculate time by the succession of ideas, what is minutely described will naturally appear long. However tedious one may be, and

[y] It is the custom of the Spanish drama, (at least the comedies of Cervantes are so printed,) to prefix to each act the names of the characters that appear in it.

[z] I recollect an instance of this sort in a novel called *Clara and Emmeline*.

[A] See Note III. Chap. xxvi.

however



however agreeable the other, a month spent in a uniform way, where the transactions of one day exactly correspond with those of the succeeding ones, will on retrospection appear to have passed more rapidly than the same space of time in which we have been engaged in a variety of transactions. Or, still more applicably to this case, let any person compare different parts of the English history [B], whose comparative chronology he has never before examined, and he will be surprised to find the different impression detail of event has made on his imagination as to duration of time. If much [c] of this detail intervenes between any two interesting events, without that detail being very minutely connected with both, the effect of their dependence on each other will be greatly weakened. This is, to my own feelings, strongly exemplified in Tom Jones. A very short period of time intervenes between the sup-

[B] For the first clear notion I had of this I must acknowledge my obligation to Dr. Priestley's Charts of History and Biography, where the time is marked by equi-distant lines, and the comparative chronology seen by one comprehensive view. See his Preliminary Description.

[c] In the Iliad, Achilles kills Hector at his first appearance in the field after the death of his friend, but from the intervening detail that behaviour impresses us a little with the idea of deliberate cruelty, which might have seemed only excusable indignation if the events had been more obviously connected. In this instance Virgil has been superior to his master;

— ‘Pallas te hoc vulnere! Pallas

‘Immolat!’

Is an imitable instance of poetical art.

This in real events is evident, as in the execution of criminals. Many an atrocious offender, whose death immediately succeeding his offence would have been looked upon with satisfaction, becomes, from the interval between them, an object of universal pity. Our legislature has seen this, and in the most atrocious of all offences, MURDER, execution follows closely after conviction.

posed.



posed final parting of Jones and Sophia; yet so long a detail of events, in which, though Sophia appears, her character, as to her passion for Jones, is so little affecting, and Jones is involved in so many adventures in which she is unconcerned, or rather worse than unconcerned, that their re-union does not give us that lively satisfaction we should expect from it, when we feel ourselves so strongly affected by their separation. This however may be partly imputed to the conduct of the poet in the catastrophe, where I own the behaviour of Sophia on her meeting with Jones, her obstinate refusal of him, and her extraordinary mode of afterwards consenting to an immediate marriage with him, seem to me perfectly unnatural. [D] Now in the drama the contracted period of the performance will not suffer an interest once warmly excited ever to cool unless from very ill conduct in the poet.

I would not be supposed to censure the body of this inimitable composition on any other ground than its effect on part of the catastrophe. Of the conduct of the work in general I have before given my opinion in the strongest terms of approbation, and the detail is in itself interesting in the highest degree, directly the reverse of Richardson, which is often trifling and tedious in the extreme.

In Mrs. Smith's novel of *Ethelinde*, though the time of the absence of Montgomery takes up but a short part of the bulk of the work, it must occupy at least as much of the poetical time as all the other incidents; yet as the detail of the intervening events is abridged, (contrary indeed to the uniformity of the tale, but which in such a case is more honored in the breach than the observance,) and in that detail the pas-

[D] See Note III. Chap. xxvi.



sion of Ethelinde for Montgomery is a prominent feature, our interest for the lovers, as such, is never relaxed. In the next chapter Aristotle allows a deviation from the rules of art if that deviation conduces to the end of poetical imitation; that is, if it makes the effect of the incidents more striking. Having mentioned Mrs. Smith, I cannot avoid paying the tribute due to her extraordinary talents, which excel in two species of composition so different as the novel and the sonnet, and whose powers are so equally capable of charming the imagination, and awakening the passions. I feel a strong wish to see both these exerted in the highest degree in one work; and that she would clothe some pathetic tale, in the conception of which she could not be excelled, with that garb of luxuriant fancy and melodious versification, in which she cannot be equalled.

## NOTE III.

## CHÆREMON.

ON comparing what Aristotle says of this person, and his mode of imitation here, with what he has before said of them in the [E] first chapter, I think we must be convinced that Aristotle approved only the regular epopee in hexameter verse, though he was obliged to class many anomalous compositions under that head, which from being imitations of human actions and characters, partook of the nature of poetry, and from being narrative, and using language only, unaccompanied by music, could not so well be classed under any other.

[E] Note III. Chap. I.



Though Athenæus calls the Hippocentaur, which is obviously alluded to in both places, a drama, (δράμα πολύμετρον,) I must prefer the authority of Aristotle. From what he says, and the manner he has introduced it, there can be no doubt of its being a narrative poem. It is true in those points where the conduct of the drama and the epopee coincide, he takes his examples promiscuously from either, and he frequently illustrates an epic rule from Sophocles, and a dramatic one from Homer. But both these passages relate solely to the epopee, not as it resembles, but as it essentially differs from the drama. It is not impossible however but this poem might be a dialogue, though not intended for representation. On which account, though Aristotle classes it with the epopee, on the same principle [F] that he does the Socratic dialogues and the mimes of Sophron [G] and Xenarchus, Athenæus might naturally enough call it a drama.

## NOTE IV.

NO LONG COMPOSITION HAS BEEN ATTEMPTED IN ANY OTHER VERSE EXCEPT THE HEROIC: NATURE HERSELF HAVING POINTED THAT OUT AS THE MOST PROPER.

THE same observation has been made as to the exclusive fitness of iambic [H] verse for the drama, and both have been strictly attended to

[F] See the above cited note.

[G] The fifteenth Idyllium of Theocritus is supposed to be taken from one of the mimes of Sophron. See Mr. Twining's sixth note, and the authority he cites. See also Warton's notes on that Idyllium in his edition of Theocritus.

[H] See Note iv. Chap. iv.

by



by the epic and tragic writers of Greece and Rome. Indeed the assertion of Aristotle, that this distinction is founded on nature seems perfectly just. Iambic verse would have been too colloquial to have kept up a tone sufficiently elevated for the epopee, when unassisted by the powers of representation, the impassioned sentiments, and more affecting incidents of the drama: while the natural elevation of heroic verse, according to the concluding sentence of this chapter, would have been too splendid for the interesting scenes of tragedy. As for any of the lyric measures, though adapted to the musical parts of the drama, they would have been still less suited to the dialogue than hexameter verse, from their being still more remote from common speech. So much so, from the violent license taken with the usual arrangement of the words, and the consequent difficulty of ready construction, as to want the clearness necessary even for epic imitation.

But in those modern languages, in which the drama and the epopee have been chiefly cultivated, I mean the Italian, the French, and the English, no criterion of this sort seems to have been unalterably settled: and perhaps the supposed propriety of one species of verse for one species of composition, is frequently determined more by custom than nature. Metastasio, (See his *Estratto della Poetica*, page 343,) asserts the superiority of the OTTAVA RIMA for the epopee. And is so partial to rhyme in general, that he doubts if the reason why the ancients did not use it, was not occasioned by the scarcity of similar terminations [1];

and

[1] It is curious that a directly contrary reason is given by Dr. Beattie. He says, 'It is true the Greeks and Romans did not admit in their poetry those similar endings of lines which we call rhyme. The reason probably was, that in the classical tongues, on account of their regular structure, like terminations were so frequent, that it required more dexterity, and occasioned a more pleasing suspense to the ear to keep them separate than to

bring



and if the invention of this ornament of versification may not be included among those improvements in science which modern industry has added to the acquirements of the ancients, such as the telescope, the mariner's compass, and the art of printing. He concludes by saying, that unrhymed verse never can be popular in Italy, and that from this circumstance nobody reads *L'ITALIA LIBERATA* of Trissino, or *LE SETTE GIORNATE DEL MONDO CREATO* of Tasso, both of which are written in *VERSI SCIOLTI*, or blank verse. It is impossible for a foreigner to judge in this case [κ]. The authority of a poet like Metastasio is great; yet when we reflect, that all his poetry except the recitative of his dramas is in rhyme, and remember how ready people are to condemn what they do not like, or do not excel in themselves, we must admit his testimony with some degree of doubt. Perhaps the subjects may be ill chosen, or particularly ill adapted to that species of verse. The title of Tasso's work gives us no favourable idea of it as a poem; perhaps the poems in other respects were faulty. Johnson says he could never read Thomson's *Liberty*, because it was in blank verse; but Johnson neither liked liberty or blank verse. It certainly is in itself a very heavy poem, but that is not to be imputed to the nature of the blank verse even of Thomson, which is remarkable for being inflated, and of diffi-

'bring them together. But in the modern languages the case is different.' *ESSAY ON LAUGHTER AND LUDICROUS COMPOSITION*, Chap. II. p. 381.

Notwithstanding these contradictory assertions, yet in point of fact, considering their respective languages, they may both be in the right. It may be more easy to rhyme in Italian than in Greek and Latin, and perhaps more difficult in English.

[κ] We all feel this in regard to modern languages, which we have frequently heard perfectly spoken, and yet take upon us to decide about those which have been dead for centuries, as if we knew them by instinct.

cult:



cult construction; since there are few poems in the language more popular than *The Seasons*; and even Dr. Johnson himself does not wish that work had the addition of rhyme.

The French are equally partial to the rhymed alexandrine for the drama; and I should conceive from the same reason, that the Italians prefer the RIMA OTTAVA for the epopee,—custom. But where custom does not authorize it, as in the French epopee, a species of poetry that will not only bear, but absolutely requires a language more different from common speech than the drama, it did not succeed. For no one I believe ever read the *Henriade* without feeling in some measure the same sensation as would arise from reading an heroic poem in [L] Sapphics.

[L] There is more monotony in Latin Sapphics than in any species of verse I know. The accents, of which French verse is destitute, fall exactly as in an English heroic verse, beginning with an accented syllable, the emphatic accent of the verse is on the first syllable of the dactyl, and the pause after the last syllable of the spondee. To this disposition of the accent we must add the exact rules of quantity, which, though often vitiated by our pronunciation, must have been marked by that of the Romans; and not only the times but the number of syllables is also exactly equal. There are only nine lines in the three first books of Horace in which this disposition of the accent and pause is not observed; in the fourth there are twenty. Dr. Watts's Sapphic Ode on the Day of Judgment is composed of complete English dramatic verses with a redundant syllable, as any person will find on reading them without dwelling too strongly either on the emphatic syllable or the pause, which characterize the Sapphic cadence. Read these lines of Shakespear as I have marked them, and you find exactly the cadence of Dr. Watts's Sapphics.

‘ If lusty love should—go in quest of beauty,

‘ Where should he find it?—

The Adonic, as to its accentual cadence only, exactly resembles a fragment of a Sapphic, consisting of the first five syllables. See Note II. Chap. xx.

In



In regard to English verse it certainly requires great caution to distinguish between natural propriety and prejudice arising from custom. As far as this I think we may say with confidence, as to natural propriety, that the looser kind of blank verse, indulged with a freer disposition of accent, (which however should never be carried so far as to destroy the cadence entirely [M]) and the indulgence of one, and sometimes even of two [N] redundant syllables, is best calculated for the drama; and that the stanza of Spenser, the elegiac stanza, or any kind of lyric measure, is unfit for the epopee. From the descriptive parts of the *Paradise Lost*, from Thomson's *Seasons*, and Mason's *English Garden*, we may safely say, that heroic blank verse is admirably fitted for descriptive poetry, but *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, and *Grongar Hill*, forbid

[M] As accent is the efficient of our versification, I consider a license of this kind equivalent to the making a false quantity in ancient verse. See Chap. xxii. Note [c] on the translation.

[N] This license is to be exercised with moderation. Thomson uses it sometimes.

‘ Outrage not my breaking heart

‘ To that degree—I cannot—’tis impossible.’

TANCRED AND SIGISMUNDA.

As Rowe also does, one of the smoothest of our dramatic poets.

‘ And plead till death the cause of injur’d innocence.’

JANE SHORE.

Nay even Milton has assumed this liberty in heroic blank verse.

‘ For solitude sometimes is best society.’

PARADISE LOST, B. IX. v. 249.

Perhaps these verses may be considered as Alexandrines, with this distinction, that the rhymed Alexandrine seldom ends with a trissyllable, and the dramatic Alexandrine, I believe, never with a monosyllable.



us to say it is exclusive. Of the comparative fitness of heroic blank verse, and rhymed verse for the epopee, I shall speak presently. But I will first mention some cases in which I think our choice of particular measures for particular kinds of poetry is guided by other principles than the nature of the verse itself.

In Note 1. on Chap. iv. I have quoted a passage from Mr. Twining, in which he observes how much the power of music, in raising particular emotions, depends on the temper of the mind. In consequence of which notion I have hazarded some ideas of my own as to the power of combination on musical effect. Now as the powers of verse [o], unconnected with intelligent language, are very weak indeed, if they exist at all, and the power of music in the same situation is universally felt and acknowledged; it must follow that the power of verse must solely depend on the intelligent words it is connected with, and where no cause obviously natural, (like that of iambics for ancient, and the looser blank verse for modern tragedy from their colloquial style,) can be

[o] I am speaking of modern verse, and ancient verse only as we pronounce it, entirely neglecting the quantity. There is a curious observation of Lord Monboddo on this head. 'It is nevertheless true, that notwithstanding the injustice we do Greek and Latin poetry in pronunciation, it still pleases even our ear more than any modern poetry. It is a matter of some curiosity to know how this happens; and I believe it might be accounted for otherwise than from the prejudice that some people imagine we have in favour of the ancients; and a system of ancient prosody (I use the word in the common acceptation) might be given, according to which we actually read their poetry, very different indeed from the [real] ancient prosody, but more agreeable to that of our own language.' ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE, Part II. Book II. Chap. vi. page 335. Perhaps on strict examination the accentual cadence of all Latin verse will be found nearly allied to some of our own measures. See the preceding remarks on Sapphic verse.

pointed



pointed out, the particular propriety of one sort of verse for one sort of composition, very often depends on custom, and our own association of ideas, which on hearing a particular kind of verse naturally recalls the subject with which it has usually been connected. Mr. Twining observes, (Note 8) that we should be much surprized 'on opening a didactic and philosophic poem to find it written in the same measure with

"Jolly mortals fill your glasses."

We certainly should from never having seen such an attempt; but if one of our best and earliest didactic poems had been written in this measure, it does not appear why it might not, from this association, have been esteemed peculiarly adapted to the subject. That the verse itself implies no levity will be sufficiently obvious when we open the *Il Penseroso* of Milton, and read,

'Hail thou goddess, sage and holy,

'Hail divinest melancholy.'

A collation of this poem and *Hudibras* will clearly shew that the same measure may be applied to the most opposite subjects.

Our triple measures also, (which those who are fond of giving ancient names to modern things may if they please call anapæstics) 'are, (as [P] Mr. Mitford observes) 'equally and peculiarly suited to the expression of riotous mirth and soft melancholy.' Of this every miscellaneous collection of ballads will convince us.

[P] Essay on Harmony of Language, Sect. xi. page 189.



In regard to our elegiac verse, (whether from this kind of prejudice or not I will not presume to say,) it appears singularly fitted for its subject; though Dr. Johnson observes it is difficult to say 'why Hammond and other writers have thought the quatrain of ten syllables elegiac.' A stanza 'that has been pronounced by Dryden, whose knowledge of English metre was not inconsiderable, to be the most magnificent of all the measures which our language affords.' To the authority of Dryden, (whose ear for the harmony of English versification demands a bolder panegyric than Dr. Johnson has here given it,) I bow with respect, though in this case not with conviction; as the [Q] only poem in that measure written by Dryden, which should confirm this assertion, certainly does not. And as for Dr. Johnson himself, however I may admire his literary character in general, as an arbiter in poetical matters, I cannot submit implicitly to the authority of the critic who wrote the lives of Gray and Milton.

I am now entering on a part of my subject where I must proceed with great caution, from the necessity of mistrusting our own judgment in opinions where perhaps we may mistake prejudice in favour of a particular hypothesis for conviction; especially when the tide of popular opinion is strongly against that hypothesis. I mean the preference of rhymed or unrhymed heroic verse for the English epopee. Indeed the predilection (I will not venture to call it prejudice,) in favor of the latter is so strong, that many of the most respectable critics of our country have boldly pronounced in unqualified terms, that rhymed verse is totally inadequate to the purpose of epic composition.

[Q] ANNUS MIRABILIS.



We have only one original work in our language which can with any propriety be classed with the regular epopee. A work of such transcendent merit that hardly any general rule as to its proper material can be laid down from the example of a poet, whose genius was capable of overcoming every difficulty; especially when we see that material employed with undoubted excellence, and wonderful effect, in those offices, where it has universally sunk under in every other hand, we are hardly authorized in imputing that excellence to the nature of the material rather than to the superior skill of the poet. Milton in the simplest parts of his poem, (the opening of the *Paradise Lost* is an admirable example,) has been able to keep up the dignity of blank verse without inflation, and to preserve [R] the equal tone of unornamented narration without descending into meanness of style, which certainly has never been attempted with success by any succeeding writer. In most parts of the descriptive poems of Thomson and Mason we see indeed original verse and propriety of style, but in every attempt at heroic imitation, Milton's manner has been so copied, or rather caricatured, that we are frequently reminded of the burlesque poem of the *Splendid Shilling* rather than of a serious work [s].

[R] That Milton's style sometimes rises into turgidity, and sometimes sinks into meanness, cannot be denied by his greatest admirers; but to maintain an unremitted excellence of versification throughout so long a poem, was perhaps beyond the effort of human excellence. Besides, when Milton introduced scripture language, which his subject frequently led him to do, he seems to have been desirous of keeping not only the words but even the arrangement of them as closely as possible to our prose translation of the Bible.

[s] This mode of imitating Milton's manner, (and which perhaps we can hardly blame, as all deviation from excellence tends to corruption of style,) is followed in some degree by most poets who use blank verse, for whatever kind of composition. But the author of *Lewishill* has shewn, that the simpler style of Shakespear's dramatic Pentameter may occasionally be transferred to the heroic.

To



To draw the comparison between the fitness of rhymed and unrhymed verse for the epopee with accuracy, is absolutely impossible from the circumstance already mentioned of our having but one regular original epic poem in our language. A circumstance we surely need not be ashamed of, since Greece boasted only of two, and Rome could not pride herself on one, for to originality the *Æneid* has no pretence. We have however a copy of the works of Homer of great and acknowledged merit; I mean Pope's Homer, which is in itself one of the most beautiful poems in any language. And after all, what is the great consequence of its want of fidelity to the original [T]. The beauties of Homer are not transfusable by any translation; and he who wishes to see all and only all that he really says, without understanding Greek, should consult a literal prose version. To quote the words of a much celebrated critic, 'You may translate books of science exactly. You may translate history, in so far as it is not embellished with oratory, which is poetical. Poetry cannot be translated, and therefore it is the poets that preserve language: for we would not be at the trouble to learn a language if we could have all that is written in it just as well in a translation. But as beauties of poetry cannot be preserved in any language except that in which it was originally written, we learn the language.' BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON, Vol. II. p. 62. In the same valuable and entertaining work is the following dialogue. 'I mentioned the vulgar saying that Pope's Homer was not a good representation of the original. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is the greatest work of the kind that ever was produced. BOSWELL. The truth is it is impossible perfectly to translate poetry. In a different language it may be the same tune, but it has not the same note. Homer plays on a bassoon, Pope on a flagelet.

[T] See Note I. on this chapter.



"HARRIS. I think heroic poetry is best in blank verse: yet it appears that rhyme is essential to English poetry from our deficiency in metrical quantities. In my opinion, the chief excellence of our language is numerous prose [u]." *IBID.* 207.

As the exclusive propriety of rhymed or unrhymed verse for the epopee has been often argued on the ground of the unfitness of rhymed verse for a translation of Homer, and the supposed failure of Pope on that account; and as we now possess what has been long a desideratum in literature, a blank verse translation of Homer by a poet of allowed merit, I shall confine my remarks on this subject to an enquiry into the respective fitness of rhyme and blank verse for a translation of Homer. In this I shall not compare particular passages of Mr. Cowper and Pope, or draw any invidious comparisons between their general execution of the work. I shall only endeavour to shew, why I think the inability of rhyme to execute a faithful translation of Homer, as far as any poetical translation can be faithful, is unfounded, and that the (sometimes wanton) deviations of Pope from the sense and spirit of his original, did not proceed from any fault in the species of versification he adopted.

As Mr. Cowper in the preface to his Homer has collected most of the objections to rhymed verse which have been made, and which certainly gain superior weight from his adoption of them as well as from his own additional remarks, I shall attempt to answer them as much as possible in the same order in which they are there inserted.

[U] In this strange and contradictory opinion of Mr. Harris we trace the quaint decision of one of our old authors, I forget which, 'That writers in verse were the best kind of writers. next to the writers in prose.'

Mr.



Mr. Cowper's first objection to rhyme as a mode of translating an ancient poet, if allowed, precludes all farther contest on the subject effectually;—that it is impossible. 'No human ingenuity,' he says, 'can be equal to the task of closing every couplet with sounds homotonous, expressing at the same time the full sense, and only the full sense of the original.' In this I perfectly agree with him; if a literal translation is meant it must be in literal prose; and where Virgil has copied Homer most nearly, he certainly might have done it still more nearly, had he rendered the original word for word; but there is a spirit and style to be copied as well as the exact words, and to do this, some degree of paraphrase is oftentimes necessary; and the real sense of an author, especially a poet, is often never so much misrepresented as by too faithful a translation. However in this free translation which is certainly meant, I cannot conceive English rhymed verse would have more difficulty to encounter than Latin Hexameters, the measure which a Roman translator of Homer would undoubtedly have chosen. The cesure, the pause [w], and the concluding Adonic, mark the boundary of the verse as much as our homotonous endings, and I should suppose were to the full as great a restraint on the poet. In short, if the only advantage blank verse has over rhymed in the translation of an ancient poet is conveying the author's meaning more clearly, it must imply, what Mr. Cowper is far from

[w] In the smoother Latin poets, with very few exceptions indeed, the pause falls immediately after the first syllable of the third foot, dividing the verse into two hemistichs, which is indeed the foundation of the monkish rhymed verses. Aulus Gellius says of Varro, L. XVIII. Chap. xv. Scribit observasse se in versu hexametro quod omnimodo quintus semipes, i. e. prior-pedis tertii syllaba, verbum finiret. We must observe not to confound the metrical pause with the pause in the sense. There can be no metrical pause so strong as the end of a verse, where the sense often requires none.

allowing,



allowing, that blank verse is of more easy composition than rhymed, and on that principle prose would be preferable to either.

As to the distinction made between original composition and translation, the same reasoning holds. The poet who is mastered by his material, and instead of bending his rhyme to his will is obliged to make his thoughts wait on his rhyme, is indeed mastered by what he ought to command. This certainly was not the case with Pope, he knew [x]

— ‘ to make coy rhyme

‘ Renounce her follies and with sense keep time ;

‘ To make proud sense against her nature bend

‘ And wear the chains of rhyme, yet call her friend.’

CHURCHILL.

Mr. Cowper in his preface also speaks in favor of occasional harsh lines as producing variety in a long work. I believe such beauties are not often discoverable either in Homer or Virgil. If they are too frequently found in [y] Milton they are the less excusable, as no poet, ancient or modern,

[x] The shackles of rhyme have been almost universally pleaded in excuse for the infidelities in Pope's translation of Homer. Will it be said that Pope had as great a skill in the Greek language as he had a command over rhymed verse? Did the faults pointed out in the *Odyssey*, in the first note on this chapter, originate from the fetters of rhyme? Was it rhyme that caused him to omit the amiable character given by Helen of Priam, in the twenty-fourth *Iliad*, or to dilate so much beyond the original the beautiful simile on the Trojan fires in the eighth? So equal do I esteem rhymed verse to a faithful translation of Homer, that I think it would be no very arduous task for a good versifier, well skilled in the original, to render Pope's Homer as faithful a copy of the original as a translation can possibly be.

[y] Perhaps Milton was led into this by a desire of imitating the bolder license of the Italian poets, as we are told by Servius, Virgil once adopted the Greek accentuation in a Latin verse.

‘ Castorea



modern, ever knew so well how to vary his cadence and produce variety of rhythm in verses equally melodious. There is a deviation from the usual arrangement of the accent (in which blank verse has greatly the superiority over rhyme) which has often the finest effect, but there is such a deviation also as is destructive of the essence of versification. Can any pleasure arise from the contrast of such a line as this of Milton?

‘ To the garden of bliss thy seat prepar’d.’

Which, contrary to the rule given to Monf. Jourdain, is neither verse nor prose. To the cadence of the heroic pentameter it has no pretence except in the two last feet; and the six first syllables form a verse consisting of two feet, triple measure, exactly resembling the finale of Midas,

‘ To the bright god of day

‘ Let us sing, dance and play.’

Mr. Cowper afterwards observes, that he cannot ‘ but add an observation on the similitude between the manner of Milton and Homer,’ and this he exemplifies in those breaks and pauses in which the English poet has copied the Grecian. Addison makes the same observation. This is not a question of opinion but of fact. And whoever will read the Iliad and Odyssey through, attentive to this particular circumstance, will be convinced that the break in the middle of a line is very far from being the

‘ Castorea Eliadum palmas EPIROS equarum.’

On this Servius remarks, ‘ Epiros is here a Greek word, on which account the E is accented..

‘ For if it had been in the Latin form, Epirus or Epiri, the accent must have fallen on pi

‘ because it is long.’

charac-



characteristic of Homer's style [z], and where a line is broken it is in a very different manner from the breaks in Milton. In Milton we sometimes see many successive verses without the smallest pause in the sense at their end; and the close of a blank verse, except the next verse begins with a foot whose first syllable is accented, can be no otherwise defined, and often runs into the succeeding line. [A] But in Homer, besides the cesure and the concluding Adonic, which (according to our mode of reading at least, by Latin accent) marks the boundary of each separate verse precisely, I believe there are hardly two lines together without a slight pause marking the end of the verse, in both his poems: a circumstance which gives a general cadence more resembling Pope's rhymed couplet than the blank verse of Milton [B]. The break in these lines

*Αὐτοῖς*

[z] More instances occur in the first hundred lines of the Iliad than in any other part of the poem of three times the length.

[A] By this defect the divisions of lines are sometimes arbitrary in our blank verse, of which Milton affords several examples. These lines,

‘ What place can be for us  
 ‘ Within heav’n’s bound, unless heav’n’s Lord supreme  
 ‘ We over-power? Suppose he should relent  
 ‘ And publish grace to all, on promise made  
 ‘ Of new subjection.’—PARADISE LOST, Book II. v. 255.

This may as well be written,

‘ What place can be for us within heav’n’s bound,  
 ‘ Unless heav’n’s Lord supreme we over-power?  
 ‘ Suppose he should relent and publish grace  
 ‘ To all, on promise made of new subjection.’

[B] Blank verse is capable of a high degree of melody without these breaks, as will appear from the example of two of our dramatic Poets. First in Rowe's Jane Shore.

‘ O that



Αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' αὐλοῖσι βέλους ἔχευεν κλέος ἐφίεις,

Βάλλ',—αἰεὶ δὲ πυρραὶ νεκρῶν καίοντο θαμνισαί.

resembles more a break in a rhymed couplet than a Miltonic verse. And if Pope did not imitate it exactly it was his own neglect, not the deficiency of his material; for in his Temple of Fame he has a couplet exactly resembling it.

'Amphion there the loud creating lyre

'Struck,—and behold a sudden Thebes aspire.'

'O that my tongue had every grace of speech,

'Great and commanding as the breath of kings,

'Sweet as the poet's numbers, and prevailing

'As soft persuasion to a love-sick maid;

'That I had art and eloquence divine

'To pay my duty to my master's ashes,

'And plead till death the cause of injured innocence.'

And in Shakespear's King John,

'If lusty love should go in quest of beauty,

'Where should he find it fairer than in Blanche?

'If zealous love should go in search of virtue,

'Where should he find it purer than in Blanche?

'If love ambitious fought a match of honor,

'Whose veins bound richer blood than Lady Blanche's?

'Such as she is in beauty, virtue, birth,

'Such is the Dauphin, every way compleat;

'He is the half-part of a blessed man

'Left to be finished by such a she;

'And she a fair divided excellence

'Whose fulness of perfection lies in him.

'O, two such silver currents when they join,

'Do glorify the banks that bound them in.'



In regard to the comparative difficulty between writing good rhymed and good blank verse, I submit implicitly to the author of the *TASK*. Whatever the difficulties may be he has effectually surmounted them [c]; and in one of the most entertaining and most original poems in our language, he has employed blank verse with success on every subject, to which verse of any kind could properly be applied.

After all, the difficulties he points out in blank verse are perhaps still more conspicuous in the composition of a good and harmonious style in prose. To invent a good cadence where only vague, and often contradictory rules are given, is more difficult than to follow known rules well. However easy it may be to rhyme, it is still more easy to write blank verse, that is, to put ten syllables in a line, with the accent falling on alternate syllables; and might not a prose writer say, and with justice too, '[D] many ornaments of no easy purchase are required to atone for the absence of this single recommendation.' How many do we find who can imitate with

[c] Dr. Johnson is of the same opinion with Mr. Cowper as to the superior difficulty of unrhymed to rhymed verse. 'In blank verse the language suffered more by distortion to keep it out of prose, than any inconvenience or limitation to be apprehended from the shackles and circumscription of rhyme.' *BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON*, Vol. I. p. 342.

If this observation of Mr. Cowper and Dr. Johnson is just, it entirely confutes the first objection to a rhymed translation of Homer.

[D] Is not the difference between prose and verse in some measure illustrated by the following observation of Mr. Gilpin on forest scenery? 'Though every animal is distinguished from its fellow by some little variation of color, character, or shape, yet in all the larger parts, in the body and limbs, the resemblance is generally exact. In trees it is just the reverse. The smaller parts, the spray, the leaves, the blossom, and the seed, are the same in all trees of the same kind, while the larger parts, from which the most beautiful varieties result, are wholly different. You never see two oaks with an equal number of limbs, the same kind of head, or twisted in the same form. However, as variety is not alone sufficient to give superiority to the tree, we give the preference on the whole to animal life.'

tolerable



tolerable success the verse of Milton and Pope; of Homer and of Virgil: but who has ever given a shadow of a resemblance to the style of Xenophon or Addison? Cicero and Dr. Johnson are strong mannerists (I do not mean to compare their styles in any other light) and therefore more easily caricatured.

One of the essential requisites of versification, as is well observed by a late writer [E], arises from a judicious mixture of uniformity and variety; the first arising from the essential rules of the art, the other from the variation of pause, cadence, &c. The favourers of rhyme think blank verse too loose as to the former; and their opponents (among whom is the gentleman I have quoted, and who carries his objection to [F] hexameters also,) think rhymed verse too closely confined by the former.

Mr. Cowper, as well as Spence, in his Essay on Pope's Odyssey, seem to think Pope would have done better to have given his translation in blank verse. It is well for his literary character that he did not attempt it. We have a story grounded indeed only on the problematical authority of Voltaire, that Pope, on being asked why Milton did not write his Paradise Lost in rhyme, answered 'Because he could not.' The answer would have come with more propriety from him, had he been asked, why he did not translate Homer into blank verse. For Pope never had tried that species of composition; but the rhymed verse alone of Milton.

[E] Essay on Versification, in the first volume of Essays on Subjects Philosophical Historical and Literary.

[F] 'As to myself I acknowledge, that however superior the hexameter may be to the heroic couplet, in other respects the perpetual recurrence of the dactyl and spondee is more fatiguing to my ear, than what Dryden calls the tinkle in the clove of the couplet.' *IBID.*



would have placed him very high among the English poets, had his *Paradise Lost* never appeared.

To conclude this subject. As I am conscious so many great names are against me, I shall not pretend to establish my own opinion by any general inference drawn from what I have said in the course of my discussion of it, but leave it to make what impression it may on the mind of the reader. I shall however in part shelter my opinion under the authority of two most respectable critics. Mr. Addison in the *Spectator*, No. 285, allows that even Milton has been too free in the use of those methods which Aristotle has prescribed for the elevation of style, and which he imputes to the nature of his verse, adding that ‘where verse is not built upon  
‘rhymes, there pomp of sound, and energy of expression, are indispen-  
‘sibly necessary to support the style and keep it from falling into the  
‘flatness of prose.’ And Dr. Beattie, in his *Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition*, Chap. II. makes this observation. ‘One end  
‘of rhymes in modern poetry is to distinguish it more effectually from  
‘prose: the Greeks and Romans distinguished theirs by the measure  
‘and by the composition, on which the genius of their languages allowed  
‘them to bestow innumerable graces, in respect of arrangement, har-  
‘mony, and variety, whereof the best modern tongues from the irregu-  
‘larity of their structure, and particularly from their want of inflexion,  
‘are but moderately susceptible; and therefore of rhyme, as a mark of  
‘distinction, our poetry may sometimes stand in need, though theirs  
‘did not. In fact we find that blank verse, except when the want of  
‘rhyme is compensated, as it is in Milton by the harmony and variety  
‘of the composition, can never have a good effect in our HEROIC poetry.’ I confess I think our rhymed versification declining since the time of Pope, who perhaps carried it to its highest possible pitch of excellence;  
all



all deviation from which must be corruption. This is the case with all the fine arts; and Genius itself is the cause of their degenerating. Great talents will not condescend to imitate; and in deviating from perfect models they deviate also from perfection itself, on which account the fine arts are seldom long stationary; they are almost continually either in a progressive or a declining state. Had a poet of superior genius to Virgil lived subsequently to him, he would certainly not have been contented to copy his versification; in which case if he could not excel him, he must have corrupted the style of Roman poetry: and from such attempts it was at last corrupted.

There appears to me a stiffness, an affected pomposity, an attempt at something not perfectly natural, in the general texture of the rhymed pentameter at present.

## NOTE V.

THOUGH WONDER OUGHT TO BE EXCITED BY TRAGEDY, YET THINGS CONTRARY TO REASON, WHICH EXCITE WONDER IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE, ARE BETTER ADMITTED IN THE EPOPEE, FROM THE ACTION NOT BEING PLACED BEFORE THE EYES.

HOW much tragedy is affected by this rule, has been shewn in the seventeenth chapter, from the unsuccessful drama of Carcinus. The critic here shews how far the epopee may venture in this case without incurring the same censure. The example he produces is the flight of Hector and the pursuit of Achilles in the Iliad, which may be tolerated in the epopee though not in the drama.

I cannot



I cannot possibly conceive, as is suggested by Mr. Twining, that the idea of stopping an army by the nod of a head, could be the absurdity meant here, as being more apparent in the representation than the recital; or that there could have been any thing more absurd in an army stopping at a nod of the head on the theatre, than by the single word, halt, in Hyde Park. The defect mentioned by Aristotle certainly lay deeper; for he in the next chapter mentions this identical circumstance as a general error against probability, excusable only as it renders the scene more interesting. [G] To us who are used to the point of honor in military affairs this improbability does not appear. But the ancients made war on a different plan. Besides from the size of our armies, and our mode of carrying on war, one man can be of little consequence in the decision of a national dispute: but the loss of Hector was like the capture of a fleet, or the destruction of an army. A general, or an admiral,

[G] The author of the Essay on the dramatic Character of Falstaff has related the following curious anecdote, to shew what little notion the American savages have of our point of honor. 'In the last war, (printed 1777) some Indians of America perceiving a line of Highlanders to keep their station under every disadvantage, and under a fire which they could not effectually return, conjectured, from observation on the habit and stability of those troops, that they were indeed the women of England who wanted courage to run away.' The Abbe Terrasson, with the true prejudice of his country-men, who can see no manners natural that are not French, hypercriticizes the criticism of Aristotle, 'who,' he says, 'being always confused in his ideas, cites as an example of the absurdly marvellous, the pursuit of Hector by Achilles, who made signs to the Greeks not to throw their darts at the Trojan hero, that he might have the sole glory of killing him; an act very simple and very natural.' It is singular enough, that as the Greeks were no favourites with the feudal writers on the Trojan war, they have actually changed this very fact; and to depreciate the warlike character of Achilles, have made him do what Aristotle and Plutarch censure him for not having done. See Shakespear's Troilus and Cressida, and Mr. Stevens's note, mentioning the writers from whom the story was principally taken.

who



who were to hazard the national posterity by a point of honor (as Admiral Vernon is said to have done at Porto-bello, by sending away a ship because he had said, in the House of Commons, he would take that place with only six ships) would be now universally censured; and that the ancients looked on this action of Achilles in the same light is plain, from a remark on it in Plutarch's Life of Pompey, where, speaking of a rash action of Pompey in assisting the Cretan pirates merely to deprive Metellus of a triumph; he compares this action with it, which he calls rather the exploit of a mad boy intoxicated with the love of fame, than of a brave man. But (with deference to the opinion of Plutarch) it does not appear that Achilles was actuated by the love of fame, but the wish to monopolize the revenge of his friend's death. His feelings resembled those of Macduff when he says,

‘ If thou be’st slain and with no stroke of mine,

‘ My wife and children’s ghosts will haunt me still.’

How much this absurdity will be encreased by the representation, appears from the [H] Regent, where the atrocity of the crimes committed renders Manuel no object on which to exercise this point of honor. The impropriety in a narration, and even in the printed play, does not strike us; but when we see the duke and the usurper engaged hand to hand before the ladies of the court, and the duke’s armed friends, we are at once struck with it.

There is an instance of forgetfulness in point of propriety, in the seventh Iliad, which I believe has escaped all the commentators, but

[H] Note I. Chap. xvii.

which



which in a drama would have been instantly discovered. Hector challenges one of the Greek chiefs to engage in single combat with him, in the front of both armies, just as they are on the point of engaging. (See verse 61 of the original, 69 of Pope.) And yet though the scene continues in the front of both armies, when Menelaus accepts the challenge, and when the lot falls afterwards on Ajax, they are both represented as arming for the fight, not by seizing again the sword, the spear, and the shield which they might have laid aside, but by dressing themselves in armour. Menelaus says,

[I] 'My corslet! 'gainst the chief myself will go,

'Heaven as it list the victory bestow.'

And afterwards

[K] 'His manly limbs in shining arms he drest.' POPE, v. 120.

And of Ajax it is said,

[L] 'Now Ajax brac'd his dazzling armor on,

'Sheath'd in bright steel the giant warrior shone.'

POPE, v. 249.

In Goldsmith's novel of the Vicar of Wakefield there is a striking instance of impropriety arising from negligence. Sir William Thornhill the lover of the youngest daughter of Primrose, is all along

[I] *Tōδε δ' ἐγὼν αὐτὸς θαυρήσομαι.*

As Mr. Pope deviates here from his original, I am forced to deviate from him.

[K] Original 103.

[L] Original 245.

represented



represented as in the vigour of youth [M]; and yet he must have been at least old enough to be father to his nephew, who cannot be supposed the son of an elder brother as the title and family estate belong to the uncle.

## NOTE VI.

WHOEVER RELATES ANY FACT IS APT TO ADD SOMETHING MARVELLOUS TO GRATIFY THE HEARERS.

ARISTOTLE exemplifies here the position he has laid down, as to the pleasure that arises from the marvellous, by a circumstance which we need no ghost to tell us, is often given to their stories by those who profess to relate real facts. And this not only by simple narrators in common conversation, but by grave historians who relate the events of nations, and make serious and political reflections on the incidents they record. Of this Herodotus has been accused, but I think, not with sufficient justice; or if he has been a little too [N] attentive in listening to, and

[M] A man turned of forty may certainly be strong and vigorous and have suffered little from the attacks of time: but a man of that age is not very likely, in real life, to gain the affections of a very young woman; and in fiction, which should copy general probability and not bare possibility, a man old enough to be a grandfather should not be made a successful lover. In many of our comedies an impropriety exactly opposite to this occurs. The old man of the piece, who is generally the father of the fine gentleman or fine lady of the drama, is drawn perfectly decrepid and bent down by all the infirmities of age, more like the great-grandfather than the father of a youth of twenty-one or a girl of eighteen.

[N] That Herodotus was not credulous of every marvellous story he heard we have a very curious proof in his fourth book, (Melpomene) where he gives an account of the circumnavigation of Africa, by a fleet of Phœnicians fitted out by order of Necus, king of Egypt.



and too lavish in relating some wonderful tales current among the nations he visited (for a man could not in his time become acquainted with the history of foreign nations by reading in his study), yet his impartiality in relating the disgraces of his own country, as well as of her enemies, though it incurred the censure of the partial Plutarch, might I think have rescued him from the sarcasm of the Roman poet, the earlier history of whose country contains an improbable series of almost continual success, [o] and puts one in mind of a bragging school-boy who can beat all the rest of the school however much they may be older and bigger than himself. The first check that Roman egotism received, was from a consciousness that their fables would be detected by a communication with the historians of this. 'Græcia mendax,' 'this nation of liars,' and especially Polybius [p].

These men affirmed, that as they sailed round the coast of Africa (from the Red Sea to the straits of Gibraltar) the sun was on their right hand, i.e. to the north of them. Now we know this must have been the fact, but it was too much for the faith of Herodotus, who says expressly 'this is incredible to me whatever it may be to others.' This passage is particularly worthy of remark, as it proves that the Cape of Good Hope had been doubled at a very early period of the art of navigation.

[o] Shenstone compares the Roman history to a romance, where we are always so sure of finding the hero of the piece victorious, that we lose the pleasure arising from expectation.

[p] There is a dissertation in Livy on what would have been the event had Alexander turned his arms against Rome. In his time the Romans had never looked out of Italy. When Hannibal invaded Italy they had engaged with foreign armies and were infinitely more powerful. But had Hannibal been an independent sovereign with the resources of Alexander, instead of the general of a commercial and jealous republic, in all human probability the Roman history would have ended with the second Punic war.

Voltaire



Voltaire in his *Questions sur l'Encyclopedie*, Art. *Histoire*, seems to favor this partiality. He says that the famous canon laid down by Cicero for history, 'Ne quid falsi dicere audeat, ne quid veri non audeat,' is to be understood with some limitation, and asks, Is it the duty of the historian to relate facts that may be imparted to him in confidence? Clearly not; for it certainly is the first duty of an historian, as of every body else, to be an honest man. But here Voltaire treats Cicero as he has treated Shakespear; first misrepresents his meaning, and then argues from that misrepresentation. He translates the precept thus, 'Que l'Historien n'ose dire une fausseté ni cacher une vérité.' 'That the historian should not dare to speak a falsehood, or conceal a truth.' But this is by no means the sense of the original, which does not either express or imply, that there is no truth however foreign to public events, that history should dare to conceal; but that there is no truth it should not dare to speak, which can relate only to such truths which it is the province of history to relate. Indeed the annalist of his own times, who alone can be in the situation supposed by Voltaire, can never have the impartiality requisite for an historian. Lucian, in his *Essay on the Manner in which History should be written*, strongly and convincingly insists on this impartiality. 'If the historian has a private pique against any persons, it is the more necessary for him to esteem himself as a public character and to pay more regard to truth than his own enmity. And if he has a particular regard for any persons on the same principle, he should not conceal their crimes. There is in short only one thing, as I have said, peculiar to history, and to which alone it should sacrifice, TRUTH [Q].'

[Q] Κ'ὰν ἰδίᾳ μισῇ τίνᾳς, πολὺ ἀναγκαϊότερον ἡγήσεται τὸ κοινόν, καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν περὶ πλεόνους ποιήσεται τῆς ἐχθρας. Κ'ὰν φιλῇ ὅμως ἐκ ἀφέξει ἀμαρτάνουλος. ἘΝ γὰρ, ὡς ἔφην τῷτο, ἴδιον Ἱστορίας, καὶ μόνη θύλειον ΤΗΙ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΙ.



There is another kind of marvellous in which the historians are apt to imitate the poets. They will sometimes a little mistake a fact to make it more interesting. If Macbeth falls in the same battle in which Macduff, who has suffered the greatest injuries from him, happens to be engaged on the opposite side, the poet, to give a stronger effect to the incident, makes him die by his hand; and so because Gryllus a son of Xenophon fell in the same battle with Epaminondas, Pausanias has made the latter fall by the former, though neither Xenophon, who concludes his history with an account of that battle, nor any other historian, mention such an event [R].

It is curious to trace the progress of the marvellous from a dark to an enlightened age; and to observe how a love for it will prevail in spite of the fewer sources which a more minute and general notion of cause and effect leave it. Superstition, with all its attendant train of witches, ghosts and fairies, formerly afforded an exhaustless supply of this kind of entertainment. And even at this time a tale of any preternatural appearance will not fail to fix our attention strongly, though it will not win our belief; and even the best and most popular of modern [s] writers will sometimes insert such narratives in their works, which certainly is not done with the intent, nor has it the effect, of displeasing their readers. Natural history seized the ground that superstition was forced to abandon, and physical succeeded to metaphysical wonder. The various properties of matter, the natural miracles revealed to us by the telescope and the microscope, the investigation of volcanoes and their effects, the wonderful operations of electricity, and the secrets of chymistry attract the curio-

[R] I am surprised that Spelman in his Life of Xenophon, should mention this as an indisputable fact.

[s] See Observer, No. 71. and Andrews's Anecdotes.



fity so strongly, that with now and then a little [r] touch of the marvellous to heighten the effect, they supply the place of dreams, omens and apparitions.

There is a curious observation in a Tract of Bishop Warburton, entitled [u] AN ENQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES OF PRODIGES AND MIRACLES AS RELATED BY HISTORIANS, which is so applicable to this subject that I shall insert it.

‘ But, not to be over fond of an hypothesis, I sha’nt scruple to confess, that [v] truth may in some cases beget admiration.

[r] Sometimes however the marvellous is not quite so gentle in its touches, witness Animal Magnetism, and the great popularity of Lavater’s book. In spite of the most enlightened philosophy, the human mind has a strong tendency to the monkish rant, ‘ Credo quod impossibile.’

[u] See Tracts by Warburton and a Warburtonian, page 87.

[v] The science of astronomy ventures some times to the verge of the marvellous as in this extract. ‘ We inhabit a planet of a stratum belonging to a compound nebula of the third form. ‘ In the crowded part of the milky way I have had fields of view that contained no less than 588 ‘ stars, and these were continued for many minutes, so that in one quarter of an hour’s time there ‘ passed through my field of view, no fewer than 116,000 stars. Among the great number of ‘ nebulae which I have already seen, amounting to more than 900, there are many which in all ‘ probability are equally extensive with that which we inhabit, and yet they are all separated from ‘ each other by considerable intervals. That the milky way is a most extensive stratum of stars ‘ of various sizes admits no longer of the least doubt; THAT OUR SUN IS ACTUALLY ONE OF ‘ THE HEAVENLY BODIES BELONGING TO IT, IS EVIDENT.’ HERSCHEL. Philos. Transf. Vol. lxxv. for 1785, quoted in a note on No. 119, of the octavo edition of the Tatler, 1789. This, in fact, is a position that may be relatively either true or false. To those parts of the universe between which and our sun the milky way is interposed it seems TRUE, to every other situation FALSE.

‘ First



' First mathematical truths, especially if new-invented theorems, will  
 ' raise it in a very high degree. Witness the old mathematician who hit  
 ' upon a considerable discovery as he was bathing; and in an extasy and  
 ' transport of mind, ran home naked through the streets. But how  
 ' observable is it here, that even in a truth it is its seeming conformity  
 ' to error that produces this admiration, by the common way of novelty  
 ' and surprize.'

## NOTE VII.

HOMER ALSO WAS THE BEST INSTRUCTOR HOW TO INTRODUCE  
 SPECIOUS FALLACIES BY MEANS OF FALSE REASONING.

HOWEVER invelliped in darkness this passage is, it must I imagine, have some relation with that in the sixteenth chapter, [w] where a discovery by false reasoning is mentioned. I think the meaning of this passage receives also some elucidation from what has been quoted from Agatho in Chapter XVIII. [x] about probable improbability, and which is again mentioned here in a sentence which almost immediately succeeds that we are now considering. But Aristotle has enlarged still more on this in his Rhetoric, L. II. Ch. XXIV.

As for the application of this principle of false reasoning here to poetic fiction, Mr. Twining's note gives the clearest solution of it, and I perfectly think with him, that it relates to the skill of the poet, who when he forms wonderful and uncommon characters, or incidents, makes

[w] See Note v. Chap. XVI.

[x] See Note VII. on that chapter.

their



their actions and effects seem so clearly the natural and probable consequences of them, that the hearer, finding them so consonant with general truth, while he yields to the delusion of the tale, [y] can perceive no absurdity in the first fictitious cause.

This conduct of the poet is no where better exemplified than in the preternatural beings of Shakespear [z].

I do not any where remember a fabulous and marvellous invention kept up in all its relations and consequences with such minute and attentive accuracy as in Swift's *Voyages to Lilliput and Brobdignag*. The relative size of the inhabitants being once mentioned, the comparative dimension of their furniture, plants, animals, &c. is adhered to with almost mathematical precision. In one of the poems prefixed to *Gulliver's Travels*, entitled the *Tears of Glumdatditch*, the reader may see this consistency as grossly violated, where in two lines Gulliver, who is said a little before to be of stature scarce a span, hunts a mite, fights a nut maggot, and carries a tea-cup on his head like a milk pail.

[y] Of this pleasing delusion Plutarch speaks in the highest terms in his *TREATISE ON THE MANNER IN WHICH YOUNG MEN OUGHT TO READ THE POETS*.

“ In this was every art and every charm.

“ To win the wisest and the coldest warm.”

POPE'S *ILIAD*, L. XIV. v. 247; original 216.

- \* The deceptions of this art cannot affect the stupid and the foolish; and therefore Simonides
- “ being asked why the Thessalians were the only people of Greece whom he could not deceive,
- “ answered because they were too ignorant to be deceived. And Gorgias defined tragedy as a
- “ delusion, wherein the person who deluded was juster than those who did not, and persons who
- “ were deluded wiser than those who were not.”

[z] See Chap. xv. Notes I and III.

As



As I conceive this to be what Aristotle means by probable impossibility, so by improbable possibility I imagine he designs such consequences as may indeed very possibly follow very common causes, yet are contrary to the general probability required in poetry, as in an instance before mentioned from the Two Gentlemen of Verona [A]. It is neither physically or morally impossible for a lover who has just rescued his mistress from a ravisher, to give her up to him immediately afterwards; but our feelings revolt more at this circumstance than at all the ghosts, fairies, and witches of Shakespear. The scene between Williams the soldier and Fluellin in Henry V. shew how an absurd cause may be concealed by pleasant and natural consequences. Fluellin supposes Williams a traitor because he challenges by a blow the glove the king told him he had plucked from the helmet of Alanson. But I do not recollect any of the critics have remarked that this hostile challenge shewed him rather an enemy than a friend. May not this be partly deemed a discovery, made by a false reasoning of the spectators [B].

#### NOTE VIII.

THE LANGUAGE OUGHT PARTICULARLY TO BE LABORED IN THOSE UNINTERESTING PARTS WHICH ARE DESTITUTE OF MANNERS AND SENTIMENT.

THE difference with which this rule must be applied to the epopee and the drama has been noticed before [c]. By laboring the language

[A] See Note v. Chap. xv.

[B] See Chap. xvi.

[C] Note viii. Chap. xxii.



Aristotle does not recommend the inflation of it by turgid expressions, bold figures, and studied inversion of phrase, but the use of a style and verification, at once elevated, simple, smooth and melodious [p].

[p] For some just observations on this subject, particularly as to tragedy, see Bp. Hurd's Note on ver. 94, of the Epistle to the Pisos.



## C H A P. XXV.

THE mutilated state in which the poetic has come down to us, is no where so evident as where quotations from the poets occur, which is particularly the case in this chapter. Indeed these in general are so partially and inaccurately cited, that they appear like extracts from a common-place book, where only a few words of the passage are set down from memory. The Abbé Terrasson makes a very just remark on the cause of this inaccuracy. Speaking of an erroneous quotation in Longinus, he adds, ‘ Neither is this the first citation from Homer that the ancients have made erroneously ; and it is exactly because they almost knew him by heart that they were more subject to cite him unfaithfully.’ I believe few modern writers trust to memory for their quotations, even from the authors with whom they are the most familiar.

## NOTE I.

NEITHER IS THE PROPRIETY OF POETRY THE SAME WITH THAT  
OF THE POLITICAL OR ANY OTHER ART.

ARISTOTLE means, that in other arts, such as the theory of government, geography, history, the merit of their professors must solely depend on their accurate acquaintance with every circumstance at all relative to the subject on which they write. Now this is by no means the case with poetry, which only requires a probable imitation of human  
actions



actions and manners. Had the Winter's Tale of Shakespear been a history, or a treatise on geography, it would have been essentially defective from his supposing Bohemia to be a maritime country. But this has not the smallest effect on the interest, and consequently on the merit of the play. Had Shakespear chosen a mode of imitation to which his powers were unequal, (we may suppose any thing,) and consequently written a bad play, the fault would have been essential, but having undertaken an imitation to which his powers were perfectly equal, and which therefore he executed well, no fault can fall on the play, the action, manners and sentiments, because the poet did not know that Bohemia was an inland country. For it is not the office of the poet to instruct his hearers in particular subjects of art, but to awaken his passions by general representations of nature.

The author of the Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful makes the following remark on this subject in his introduction to that elegant work.

‘ Why should a person be shocked at a shipwreck on the coast of Bohemia who does not know but that Bohemia may be an island in the Atlantic Ocean? and after all, what reflection is this on the natural good taste of the person here supposed.’

It is true however that at present such an error would condemn the best play that could be possibly written. For there are so many more persons now, who understand the first elements of geography than are capable of feeling, or judging of a tragedy. Besides, it is impossible that a poet of the present day could have that general knowledge of human events, and propriety of conduct, fit to enable him to imitate human actions and manners, and be so grossly ignorant as this must shew him to be. The mistake of Shakespear is a proof of the general ignorance



rance of his age. Were a poet now to make such an error, it would be corrected in the rehearsal, even by the scene-shifters.

A mistake of the same kind, as the illustration from the hind by Aristotle, occurs in the Ode on Spring, by Mr. Warton, one of the most beautiful and original descriptive poems in our language, and which strongly shews the force of poetical imitation in [A] rendering objects that have no beauty in themselves highly beautiful in description. I suppose there are few scenes less pleasing and picturesque in themselves than the view from Catherine Hill near Winchester, over the bare adjacent downs, and on the Itchin at its feet, formed into a navigable canal, and creeping through a wide valley of flat-water meadow, intersected often at right angles by strait narrow water courses. But hear the poet, and observe how the scene appears in the picture he has given of it without changing the features of the original.

- ‘ O’er the broad downs, a novel race,
- ‘ Frisk the lambs with faltering pace,
- ‘ And with eager bleatings fill
- ‘ The fofs that skirts the beacon’d hill.
- ‘ His free-born vigor yet unbroke
- ‘ To lordly man’s usurping yoke,
- ‘ The bounding colt forgets to play,
- ‘ Basking beneath the noontide ray.
- ‘ And stretch’d upon the daisies pied
- ‘ Of a green dingle’s sloping side ;

[D] See Note. I. Chap. IV.

• While



- ‘ While far beneath where nature spreads
- ‘ Her boundless length of level meads,
- ‘ In loose luxuriance taught to stray
- ‘ A thousand tumbling rills inlay
- ‘ With silver veins the vale, or pass
- ‘ Redundant through the sparkling grafs.’

Besides the general beauty of the description it must have a particular one in the eyes of every Wykhamist as recalling the idea of the days of early youth, the joys of which are strongly impressed on the memory, while the hours of school restraint, which sometimes considered going to hills even as a task, are but faintly traced.

But to return to the object of the note. What hypercritic would censure these lines:

- ‘ Scarce a bee with airy wing
- ‘ Murmurs the bloffom’d boughs around,
- ‘ That cloath the garden’s SOUTHERN MOUND.’

Because the south wall of a garden is its northern bound ?

An impropriety is often found in the works of the earlier engravers from copying directly from the drawing, which occasions the figures of the impression to be reversed, and the sword to be in the warrior’s left hand, and the shield on his right. This is never discovered without being purposely looked for.

As Aristotle observes however, that such errors, however trifling they may be, are still errors, and as such ought to be avoided if possible : we may justly censure the arrogance of these writers, who founding their  
pretensions,



pretensions to fame on higher excellencies, wantonly, and sometimes wilfully, affect to be negligent and even ignorant of slighter things. This species of self importance will often obtrude itself into the conversation of those persons who think too highly of their own merit, where to the discerning it has an effect directly the reverse of that which is proposed[B]. It is nevertheless sometimes a defect attending real merit. I knew a gentleman high, and deservedly so, in literary reputation, who had this foible in a great degree. He thought it shewed superior attention to things of extraordinary consequence to pay none to common occurrences. He lived near London; and a friend happening in the spring to ask him the state of vegetation in the country, he answered him, that he was too much employed in other objects to give any attention to things of that nature. His friend, a little piqued at such an absurd affectation of consequence, replied, 'I am surprized, Sir, at that, since Solomon, who had some reputation for wisdom in his day, could speak of plants from the cedar of Libanus to the hyssop that grew on the wall.'

That agreeable and honest egotist Montaigne speaks of his own ignorance and want of dexterity in many of the common offices of life; but so far from priding himself on it he prefaces his account with the following remark. 'But great minds are universal minds; open, and prepared for every thing, and if not actually informed, immediately capable of receiving information. MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS, L. II. Ch. XVII. ON PRESUMPTION.'

[B] 'The true, strong, and sound mind, is the mind that can equally embrace great things and small. Now I am told the king of Prussia will say to a servant, "Bring me a bottle of such a wine, which came in such a year; it lies in such a corner of the cellar." BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON, Vol. II. p. 254.

Exactly



Exactly correspondent with this was the judgment passed by a country clergyman on a late nobleman in high estimation both in the literary and the political world. 'My lord——' he said, 'is not a great man; he does not know wheat from barley.'

## NOTE II.

LIKE SOPHOCLES WHO SAID HE DREW HIS CHARACTERS AS THEY OUGHT TO BE, AND EURIPIDES AS THEY REALLY WERE.

BISHOP HURD, in a note on verse 317 of Horace's Epistle to the Pisos, has given a sense to this passage different from its usual acceptation, and which I had inserted in the first edition of my translation. But I think Mr. Twining has clearly confuted this opinion as to the particular [c] application of it here. But of this I shall leave the reader to judge for himself, by laying the reasoning of both before him.

The bishop of Worcester, after citing this sentence of Aristotle proceeds. 'The meaning of this is, Sophocles from his more extended commerce with mankind had enlarged and widened the narrow partial conception arising from the contemplation of particular characters, into a complete comprehension of the kind. Whereas the philosophic Euripides, having been mostly conversant in the academy, when he came to look into life, keeping his eye too intent on single really existing personages, sunk the kind in the individual, and so painted his

[c] For the particular purpose of the bishop's note, which is to discriminate between general and particular characters, as objects of the drama, and especially of comedy, nothing can be more accurate and conclusive than the reasoning.

' characters,



characters, naturally indeed and truly with regard to the objects in view, but sometimes without that general and universally striking likeness which is demanded to the full exhibition of poetical truth.

To this Mr. Twining answers. According to this interpretation, which I am taking the liberty to examine, Sophocles is made to answer the charge [D] by denying its truth: for the answer as here stated will be this. You say my representations are not true, and those of Euripides are true. I deny this. You use the term improperly. My representations are "agreeable to truth" because they are "collected from wide observation, from human nature at large;" those of Euripides are not agreeable to truth because they are representations not of the kind but of individuals. The answer, as I understand Aristotle, is very different. The charge is not denied, or explained away, but admitted and justified. Sophocles says, "If you would have men represented as they are, οἷοι εἶσι, you must go to Euripides. I have not drawn them so. I never intended to draw them so; I have done better. I have delineated mankind not such as they really are, but such as they ought to be." Euripides does not appear to have been charged by those objectors with what may be termed, individual impropriety of imitation, but with too close and portrait-like delineation of general nature. In short, the difference which I understand to be here intended between the two poets cannot be better expressed than it is by the ingenious commentator himself in the beginning of the note to which I refer, where it is observed, (page 253) that "truth may followed too closely in works of imitation, as is evident in two respects. For, 1. the artist, when he would give a copy of nature,

[D] For not describing things according to truth.



“ may confine himself too scrupulously to the exhibition of particulars,  
 “ and so fail of representing the idea of the kind. Or, 2. in applying  
 “ himself to give the general idea, he may collect it from an enlarged  
 “ view of real life, whereas it were still better taken from the nobler  
 “ conception of it as subsisting only in the mind.” Now if we apply  
 “ the latter of these differences to the two poets in question, if we say  
 “ In applying himself to give the general idea, Euripides collected it  
 “ from an enlarged view of real life, whereas Sophocles took it from  
 “ the nobler conception of it as subsisting only in the mind;” this  
 “ will express exactly what I take to be the sense of Aristotle. To the  
 “ support which the common interpretation of this passage receives from  
 “ Aristotle himself, may be added that which it receives, and I believe  
 “ is generally acknowledged to receive, from the tragedies themselves,  
 “ which are extant of the two poets in question. That Euripides is in  
 “ general liable to the censure of particular imitation of “ sinking the  
 “ kind in the individual,” I cannot say I have observed. But who can  
 “ read this poet without observing the examples with which he every  
 “ where abounds of that very “ general and universally striking like-  
 “ nesses which is demanded to the full exhibition of poetical truth.” In  
 “ Sophocles we find more elevation, more dignity, more of that im-  
 “ proved likeness and ideal perfection which the philosopher expresses  
 “ by his *οἷα δεῖ—πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον*. In Euripides we find more of the *ἀληθές*,  
 “ the *ὅμοιον*. We are oftener reminded of the common nature and  
 “ common life, which we see all around us. And if this with other  
 “ causes be sometimes found to lower the imitations of this poet beneath  
 “ the proper level of tragic dignity, and to produce something of the  
 “ *κωμωδία τίς ἡθολογυμένη*, which Longinus attributes to the *Odyssey*, the  
 “ fault is amply redeemed, perhaps in those very parts by the pleasure  
 “ which results from the closeness and obviousness of the imitation.



‘ certainly in many others by those precious touches of nature which  
 ‘ must at once strike every individual of every audience; such as if I  
 ‘ mistake not are much more rarely to be found in Sophocles, and  
 ‘ such perhaps, after all we have heard about the BEAU IDEAL and  
 ‘ improved nature, can only be produced by an exact transcript of nature  
 ‘ as it is, of what the poet has actually felt himself, and actually seen in  
 ‘ others.’

This reasoning appears to me unanswerable.

That for the purposes of the drama at least, if not for every species of poetry which professes to imitate human actions; a comprehensive view of real character is much superior to this image of perfection in the mind, is to me evident beyond a doubt, and seems founded on the superiority of truth, to unnatural fiction, exemplified in such characters as Tom Jones and Amelia, when contrasted with Grandison and Clarissa. It must be remembered also, though it does not seem to have occurred to the bishop, that Aristotle is not drawing a parallel between the two tragic poets here, neither does he here or elsewhere give any shew of preferring Sophocles to Euripides, but rather the contrary; for he has in another place allowed Euripides the merit of attaining the end of tragedy more effectually than [E] any other poet. A compliment of no common magnitude, as it is on the same principle that in the next chapter he finally determines the superiority of tragedy over the epopee. Besides in this chapter, Aristotle is not pointing out beauties, but shewing how faults may be palliated.

[E] Chap. XIII. Τραγικώτατος τῶν ποιητῶν.



It is impossible for the English reader to go through Mr. Twining's note without seeing how applicable the parallel between the two Greek tragic poets is to the father of the British drama and our other best tragic writers, as also the French dramatic poets. Substitute Shakespear for Euripides, and Thomson or Voltaire for Sophocles, and the criticism will be equally just.

## NOTE III.

IF IT DOES NOT COME UNDER EITHER OF THESE DESCRIPTIONS  
HE MAY SAY IT IS ACCORDING TO RECEIVED OPINION, AS  
IN WHAT RELATES TO THE GODS.

IF the objection to the poet is, that he has not drawn his characters conformable with truth, and he can neither shew that they are according to truth, or that the deviation from truth is occasioned by a desire to represent characters above the level of human nature, he may yet excuse himself by saying, that he has followed models, which, though they may neither have an archetype in nature, or be better than perhaps they really are, nevertheless have the sanction of popular opinion for their credibility. This seems to have been exactly the case with Homer's gods; and the popularity of Shakespear's supernatural beings rests on the same ground even at this day, when the belief of them is nearly annihilated. How entirely has Shakespear availed himself of a vulgar superstition in his Ghost of Hamlet which first appears, 'the bell then beating one,' and which vanishes at the crowing of the cock. And with what propriety, according to the fabulous creed of his age, and which is still orthodox in the regions of fiction, has he distinguished the



fairies from the more gloomy tenants of the invifible world in thefe beautiful lines.

- ‘ Night’s fwift dragons cut the clouds full faft,
- ‘ And yonder fhines Aurora’s harbinger,
- ‘ At whose approach ghofts wandering here and there
- ‘ Troop home to church yards.—Damned fpirits all
- ‘ That in crofs ways and floods have burial,
- ‘ Already to their wormy beds are gone.’

— — — — —

- ‘ But we are fpirits of another fort :
- ‘ I with the morning’s love have oft made fport,
- ‘ And like a forefter the groves may tread
- ‘ Even till the eastern gate all fiery red,
- ‘ Opening on Neptune with fair bleffed beams,
- ‘ Turns into yellow gold his falt green freams.’

#### NOTE IV.

OR PERHAPS IT MAY BE SAID THAT THE FACT WAS ACTUALLY  
SO AT THAT TIME.

IF the poet has fo managed as to represent the customs of the time in which the action of his poem is fuppofed to have paffed, however contrary they may be to thofe of his own age, fo far from needing an excufe it will itfelf be ftrong proof of merit. In this the excellence of Homer, as a juft imitator of the manners of the age he wrote on, is fhewn by a particular inftance. [F] In his own time the art of horfe-

[F] See Pope’s Effay on Homer’s battles.



manship was arrived at a pitch of perfection capable of rivalling the exploits of Hughes and Astley. But though in his fifteenth Iliad, v. 679, (v. 822 of Pope's translation) when he speaks in his own person he does not scruple to compare Ajax leaping from deck to deck of the Grecian vessels to a skilful horseman, who manages [G] four horses at a time, leaping occasionally from the back of one to the other; yet in describing the different evolutions of the field he never puts his warriors on horseback, but always represents them as fighting from chariots. But the excuse which Aristotle means to make is from the poet's representing things as they were at the time while he was writing, which, as far as they differ only from the time of the criticism, is allowable; but if they differ from the practice of the time concerning which the poet is writing, they are excusable only on the same principle with the objections mentioned in the first note on this chapter. Virgil has been guilty of this fault in the very circumstance just mentioned of the horsemanship of Homer's heroes. For Ascanius is represented as an expert horseman soon after he is at Carthage.

Our Shakespear is too often guilty of this fault, and is apt to make the customs of all ages and countries congenial with those of his own.

[G] Pope has entirely destroyed the difficulty of this manœuvre by saying they were

‘ Four fair courfers practis'd to obey.’

Here is an instance, it is true, of the sense and spirit of the original sacrificed to rhyme; but could not Pope have done better when a very inferior rhymist might have written,

‘ So when some man, the courser skill'd to rein,  
‘ Four steeds selecting from a num'rous train,  
‘ To the full city from th' extended mead,  
‘ Impels their flight, and urges on their speed.’

When



When however he only incurs the censure made by hypercriticism, and to which the candor of Aristotle here furnishes an answer, he affords sometimes entertainment and sometimes difficulty to the antiquarian. We learn that in the days of Queen Elizabeth rooms of state were strewed with rushes, and we hear with surprize, that the [H] dagger was used for breaking heads, as we now speak of a cudgel.

How absurd will the equestrian expedition of Sophia and her maid appear to future readers, who shall not know that in the year 1745 post chaises, which became very soon after so universal, were hardly if at all used. I do not exactly know when two-wheeled chaises (now entirely laid aside) were partially introduced from France, but I very well remember the first four-wheel chaise that run post, introduced by March of Maidenhead-bridge, at least eight years since the era of Tom Jones.

There is a passage in the Spectator that may probably puzzle our posterity, who will hear so much of the exclusive merit of English gardening and its comparative excellence and distinguishing character when opposed to the same art among our neighbours, from the writers of the present day.

‘ We have before observed, that there is generally in nature something  
‘ more grand and august than what we meet with in the curiosities of  
‘ art. When therefore we see this imitated in any measure it gives us a

[H] The old English dagger must have something resembled a stick with a tuck at the end of it, as in Grose’s account of ancient armour, one of the uses ascribed to it in military service is to be stuck in the ground for the purpose of fastening a horse to it.

‘ nobler



‘ nobler and more exalted kind of pleasure than what we receive from  
 ‘ the nicer and more accurate productions of art: on this account our  
 ‘ English gardens are not so entertaining to the fancy as those in France  
 ‘ and Italy, where we see a large extent of ground covered over with an  
 ‘ agreeable mixture of garden and forest, which represent every where  
 ‘ an artificial rudeness, much more charming than that neatness and ele-  
 ‘ gancy which we meet with in those of our own country. —

‘ Our British gardeners instead of humouring nature love to deviate  
 ‘ from it as much as possible. Our trees rise in cones, globes and pyra-  
 ‘ mids. We see the marks of the scissars upon every plant and bush.’  
 SPECTATOR, No. 414, by ADDISON.

Pope’s Epistle to Lord Burlington will appear equally surprizing.

## NOTE VI.

IN EXAMINING WHETHER A THING IS EITHER SAID OR DONE  
 PROPERLY OR IMPROPERLY, WE ARE NOT ONLY TO REGARD  
 WHETHER THE THING ITSELF IS GOOD OR BAD; BUT WE  
 MUST CONSIDER THE CHARACTER OF THE ACTOR OR SPEAKER.

IF it is necessary for the poet to introduce vicious persons, it is also  
 necessary for him to make them speak and act in character, and no blame  
 can be incurred from this if the character is so marked, and the expressions  
 so introduced, as to shew they are not the real opinion of the poet [1].

[1] See Note IV. Chap. XII.



Dr. Beattie, who censures a fault of this kind in Cowley, and another in Dryden's translation of Virgil, makes this judicious distinction. 'But  
' if instruction may be drawn from the speeches and behaviour of  
' Milton's devils, of Shakespeare's Macbeth, and of Virgil's Mezentius,  
' Why is Cowley blamed for a phrase which at worst implies only a  
' slight fall of momentary pride [κ]? I answer, that to speak seriously  
' the language of intemperate passion is one thing, to imitate or describe  
' it another. By the former, one can never merit praise or esteem; by  
' the latter, one may merit much praise and do much good. In the one  
' case we recommend intemperate passions by our example, in the other  
' we may render them odious by displaying their absurdity and conse-  
' quences. To the greater part of his readers an author cannot convey  
' either pleasure or instruction by delivering sentiments as his own, which  
' contradict the general conscience of mankind.' *ESSAY ON POETRY  
AND MUSIC, Part I. Chap. I.*

If impious and immoral sentiments are put into the mouth of a virtuous character, the same fault is incurred perhaps rather in a higher degree. Since what a man says or even writes himself may be supposed to proceed from passion; but sentiments that he makes a good man pronounce he will be imagined to approve from principle. In the *Tatler*, No. 122, by Addison, the circumstance is mentioned of Socrates quitting the theatre when a tragedy of Euripides was performing, on account of the following line being spoken by Hippolytus,

[κ] The following are the exceptionable lines of Cowley that are alluded to.

' What shall I do to be for ever known,  
' And make the age to come my own?  
' I shall like beasts or common people die,  
' Unless you write my elegy.'

' My



[L] 'My tongue has sworn indeed, but not my heart.'

On which the following remark is made: 'Had a person of a vicious character made such a speech, it might have been allowed as a proper representation of the baseness of his thoughts; but such an expression out of the mouth of the virtuous Hippolytus was giving a sanction to falsehood, and establishing perjury by a maxim.'

But a sentence grossly impious, by whomsoever spoken, will so far affect the feelings of an audience in any country, where religion is at all held in veneration, that they will instantly be shocked. Plutarch mentions a circumstance of this kind in his Dialogue on Love. 'You have certainly heard with what tumult [M] Euripides was received when he opened his tragedy of [N] Menalippe in this manner:

[O] "I know not Jove, or know him for my foe."

'And other daring expressions. On which account, when he wrote out and corrected the piece, he changed the verse in the manner it now stands.

[L] Η γλῶσσ' ὀμῶμοχ', ἡ δὲ φρήν ἀνάμοτος.

[M] An anecdote something similar is told of Æschylus. See Note IV. Chap. XII.

[N] The speech of this lady is in Chap. XV. mentioned by Aristotle as an instance of impropriety of manners. The story of the drama is very singular: she has children by Neptune, whom her father taking for the unnatural produce of his cows is going to destroy. On which Menalippe makes a long speech to shew him that, on the principles of philosophy, they may be their natural offspring, and which Dionysius of Halycarnassus says Euripides introduced on purpose to shew his knowledge in the philosophical tenets of Anaxagoras.

[O] This verse is strangely mutilated in the original. I have followed the reading proposed by Xylander in his note on the passage.



[P] "What's truly said of Jove, and who he is,  
 "I only know from fame."

In the *Alzire* of Voltaire, Zamor says to Alzire :

'Perissent tes sermens & le Dieu qui J'abhorre.'

The shocking blasphemy of this verse, when we consider of whom it is spoken, whatever may be the situation of the speaker no English audience would tolerate; Hill in his translation has accordingly omitted it [Q].

#### NOTE VI.

##### THE WORD MAY BE FOREIGN.

WE have already taken notice of the impossibility of giving modern examples in serious composition of this property of language, which consisted in transferring a word from one Grecian dialect to another. We may however illustrate in some degree this objection and its answer from what might happen in common discourse. We will suppose a person to say, 'I would rather want my dinner than have it.' This is objected to as a contradiction. But the objector is answered, 'The speaker is a Scotsman, and to want, in the Scottish dialect, signifies simply 'to be without, and conveys no idea of wishing to possess, as it does in 'English.'

[P] This is something like the doctrine of Xenophanes, mentioned in this chapter.

[Q] For farther observations on this subject, see Note xvi. on this chapter.

The



The examples in the text are sufficiently clear; especially that of Dolon. Had he been deformed in body he could not have possibly been so active as he is represented. The same objection may be made to the deformity of Richard III. as he is described by Shakespear and the historians friendly to the house of Tudor; and goes far to justify the historic doubts of Walpole and [R] Buck. A modern general may command an army, however deficient in bodily strength and activity, provided he has good health. And an admiral may command a fleet in an armed chair on the quarter deck; but a warrior with a withered arm and a distorted body, was ill calculated to turn the tide of battle in the wars between the houses of York and Lancaster; or to make the personal exertions Richard is said to have made in Bosworth-field.

## NOTE VII.

THE EXPRESSIONS MAY BE CONSIDERED AS METAPHORICAL.

HERE also the examples in the original are exactly equivalent with what we continually meet in our own language. We say, 'a thousand,' 'a million,' for any indeterminate large number. The same of time: 'all day,' 'a year,' 'an age.'

[R] An historian who wrote in the reign of James I. and who strongly combats the opinion of Richard's deformity.



## NOTE VIII.

SOMETIMES THE OBJECTION MAY BE ANSWERED BY ATTENDING  
TO THE ACCENT.

THE sense of a word is seldom materially changed by the accent in English [s]. Substantives and verbs are sometimes so distinguished, as 'cónverse,' and 'to convérse;' 'cónvert,' and 'to convért.' Yet some words are entirely changed in signification by the accent, as 'gállant,' and 'gallánt;' 'píquet,' the game, and the 'píquet,' of an encamped battalion.

[s] Aristotle, in his Treatise De Sophisticis Elenchis, L. I. Chap. IV. where he treats of this effect of accent as to creating doubts, and illustrates it by the same examples, makes this very curious remark. Παρὰ δὲ τὴν προσωδίαν ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἀνευ γραφῆς διαλεκτικῶις ἔραδιον ποῖσαι λόγον· ἐν δὲ τοῖς γεγραμμέναις καὶ ποιήμασι μᾶλλον. 'It is not easy to make a fallacy by the accent in arguments not written, but rather in written language and poetry.' From this it is obvious, that in the time of Aristotle Greek was spoken by accent, and that the accents were not marked in writing, nor apparent in the recitation of verse; that is, I imagine, in the recitation of Greek verse, accent was lost in the superior momentum given to quantity, as in Latin verse, and even in Greek verse as we now read it, quantity is lost in the superior momentum we give to Latin accentuation.

NOTE



## NOTE IX.

OBJECTIONS MAY BE CONFUTED BY THE DIVISION OF THE  
SENTENCE.

THAT is the punctuation. Shakespear has strongly exemplified this in his prologue to the clown's play in *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

[T] Mr. Sheridan has pointed out many instances of this breach of propriety in his *Treatise on Elocution*, which are frequently made by the clergy in the usual mode of reading the Liturgy. One is very common, even among good readers, which, besides offending greatly against euphony, makes nonsense of the passage. I mean in the prayer for the King. 'Our most gracious sovereign lord King George.' This is commonly read with a stop after sovereign, making it a substantive, and giving his majesty a ridiculous title, something like that of a duke's younger son. The stop should be obviously after lord, making sovereign an adjective. Our sovereign lord, the King, is the general legal designation of his majesty. Turn to a common prayer book of Queen Anne, and the absurdity will be still more striking. I have heard some careless readers in the prayer for the Prince read, 'George Prince—of Wales,' exactly as if they were speaking of a private inhabitant of the principality.

The following line of Pope,

'And make immortal verse as mean as mine,'

[T] See Note iv. Chap. xix.

will



will have opposite meanings, according to the position of the stop, after 'immortal,' or 'verse,' which last by the way is the most natural construction.

## NOTE X.

## OR BY AMBIGUOUS EXPRESSIONS.

ARISTOTLE explains his meaning fully as to this, in his Treatise DE SOPHISTICIS ELENCHIS, L. I. Chap. IV. He clearly there shews, as Mr. Twining says, that by ambiguity ([v] ἀμφιβολία) he designs such different senses, as two or more words are capable of independently of their punctuation. As juxta-position is the principal sign of connexion in English, it is difficult to give instances of this, independent [x] of the punctuation. The example given by the philosopher in the place above cited, τὸ βέλεσθαι λαβεῖν με τοὺς πολεμίους. 'Velle capere me hostes,' it is impossible to translate into English, and preserve the ambiguity, which consists in its being doubtful whether it expresses a wish that I should take, or be taken by the enemy [y].

Perhaps the best instance that can be given of this kind of ambiguity in English, is the promiscuous use [z] of 'he,' 'him,' 'she,' 'her,'

[v] The French have naturalized the Greek word, AMPHIBOLOGIE.

[x] See Note VI. Chap. XXII.

[y] In Home's Elements of Criticism, Chap. XVIII. Sect. II. many instances of ambiguity are cited from English writers, but most of them may be made clear by the punctuation

[z] See Encyclopedie, Article AMPHIBOLOGIE. Such an expression as, 'he fights himself,' comes under this class exactly.

when



when a number of persons are spoken of, and which occasion the frequent, though necessary repetition of 'he the said A. B.' in our deeds and law proceedings.

Sometimes however in our verse an alteration of the usual arrangement of the words, will create an ambiguity that punctuation cannot elucidate. An instance occurs in a translation I have seen of two lines of the fifth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

- ' Now Actor's son, whose hands a pole-ax wield,
- ' Without a sword the gallant Perseus kill'd.'

Taking these verses by themselves it would appear that the son of Actor had killed Perseus, both from the position of the words, and the circumstance of the pole-axe. From the advantage the Latin has of distinguishing the governing and governed case by the termination, no such ambiguity appears in the original.

- ' At non Actoriden Erithen, cui lata bipennis
- ' Telum erat, admoto petit ense.' —

There is a striking instance in Thomson's tragedy of *Tancred and Sigismunda*, where the construction of the sentence and the sense are in opposition to each other. Sigismunda says,

- ' Retire! for tho' th' emotions of my HEART
- ' Can ne'er alarm my VIRTUE; yet, alas!
- ' They tear IT so, they pierce IT with such anguish,
- ' Oh, 'tis too much! I cannot bear the conflict!'

Here the construction points to VIRTUE, but the sense obviously to HEART as the antecedent of IT.



## NOTE XI.

OR BY THE ESTABLISHED CUSTOM OF SPEECH, AS—ARTIFICERS  
IN STEEL ARE CALLED BRAZIERS.

ON the same principle we call actors of comedy and tragedy equally [A] comedians. And we also use gold for money in general. May not we infer our superior wealth from the circumstance of this being peculiar to ourselves. All the other nations of Europe, with whose language I am at all acquainted, using silver in the same sense. 'I have no silver,' would be a very unfaithful translation of 'Je n'ai point d'argent.' In Latin, *æs*, (*brass*) is equivalent with money.

## NOTE XII.

IT IS RIGHT ALSO, WHEN A WORD SEEMS TO BE CAPABLE OF  
GIVING CONTRARY SENSES, TO EXAMINE HOW MANY SIGNI-  
FICATIONS IT MAY HAVE IN THE PASSAGE BEFORE US.

THE reader who has honored me with his attention thus far, will be at no loss for examples of this sort of solution. The various commentators on Shakespear afford numerous instances. I will select one from Hamlet. 'Let the devil wear black for I'll have a suit of fables.' Now the word fables may have two contradictory senses here. It may mean mourning as in the passage from Massinger, quoted by Farmer; or it may mean a

[A] See Note [c] Chap. III. on the translation.



rich drefs, as in Malone's quotation from Ben Jonfon. The word is capable of either fenfe in the paffage before us. The very contradiction it appears to convey in the firft fenfe, is not unlikely to be the intent of a man who is counterfeiting madnefs: and on the other hand, a drefs made of the fkins of the animal, would be a very proper habit for the climate of Denmark, efpecially at a feafon of the year when Hamlet, Horatio and the foldiers complain much of the feverity of the cold. As to which meaning is the moft probable here,

‘ Who fhall decide when doctors difagree?’

But I am inclined to think with Mr. Farmer, that it is meant to be equivocal. [B] Hamlet though he affected to be mad was not really fo. Therefore he might wifh to fpeak fenfe, and at the fame time give it the appearance of nonfenfe.

[B] It muft be confefled Shakespear has not been very careful in keeping up this diftinction throughout the play. See Note v. Chap. xv. Since I wrote the above I have met with another paffage in this play, which, if the word is not equivocal, appears to confirm the firft fenfe. Hamlet enquiring of Horatio about the ghof; asks impatiently

‘ His beard was grizzled?—No?’

Horatio answers,

‘ It was, as I have feen it in his life,

‘ A SABLE filver’d.’



## NOTE XL

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ON the same principle we call actors of comedy and tragedy equally [A] comedians. And we also use gold for money in general. May not we infer our superior wealth from the circumstance of this being peculiar to ourselves. All the other nations of Europe, with whose language I am at all acquainted, using silver in the same sense. 'I have no silver,' would be a very unfaithful translation of 'Je n'ai point d'argent.' In Latin, *æs*, (*brass*) is equivalent with money.

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rich dress, as in Malone's quotation from Ben Jonson. The word is capable of either sense in the passage before us. The very contradiction it appears to convey in the first sense, is not unlikely to be the intent of a man who is counterfeiting madness: and on the other hand, a dress made of the skins of the animal, would be a very proper habit for the climate of Denmark, especially at a season of the year when Hamlet, Horatio and the soldiers complain much of the severity of the cold. As to which meaning is the most probable here,

'Who shall decide when doctors disagree?'

But I am inclined to think with Mr. Farmer, that it is meant to be equivocal. [B] Hamlet though he affected to be mad was not really so. Therefore he might wish to speak sense, and at the same time give it the appearance of nonsense.

[B] It must be confessed Shakespear has not been very careful in keeping up this distinction throughout the play. See Note v. Chap. xv. Since I wrote the above I have met with another passage in this play, which, if the word is not equivocal, appears to confirm the first sense. Hamlet enquiring of Horatio about the ghost; asks impatiently

'His beard was grizzled?—No?'

Horatio answers,

'It was, as I have seen it in his life,

'A SABLE silver'd.'



## NOTE XIII.

SOME MEN TAKING UP AN OPINION HASTILY, AND THEN REASONING FROM PREJUDICE IN FAVOUR OF THAT OPINION, WILL BLAME ANY THING THAT IS CONTRARY TO WHAT THEY HAVE PRE-SUPPOSED.

THIS position of Glauco is compleatly illustrated by the example in the text. Most of the erroneous opinions of the commentators on the work before us arise from the same cause; especially many of the French dramatic rules, which are said to be taken from Aristotle, when in fact they are not. The depreciating the valor of Achilles, as if Homer had made him invulnerable, comes under this predicament [c].

## NOTE XIV.

THE IMPOSSIBLE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS CONDUCTING ON THE WHOLE EITHER TO THE END, WHICH IT IS THE AIM OF POETRY TO ATTAIN, OR TO EXCELLENCE OF CHARACTER, OR AS BEING AGREEABLE TO RECEIVED OPINION.

I IMAGINE Aristotle alludes here to the pursuit of Hector in the Iliad, which he has twice mentioned as incurring this blame, and that he is now shewing us on what principles it may be vindicated.

[c] Note vii. Chap. xv.

First,



First, It conduces to the main end of poetry, the production of interest, [D] for we must be more interested for the event of a single combat than the destruction of one person by superior numbers; and such a circumstance will afford greater variety and produce greater effect in the detail.

Secondly, The character of Achilles, in point of courage at least, if not [E] of conduct, will be raised; and the valor and address of both combatants will be shewn in a more conspicuous light. It is impossible for contempt of inevitable death to be more strongly expressed than in the two lines uttered by Achilles after the dying prophecy of Hector.

‘Die thou the first—when Jove and heav’n ordain,

‘I follow thee.’ [F]—

And thirdly, As to its being agreeable to received opinion, it is very possible it might be so; and we may safely give it credit on the authority of the Stagirite.

Our modern novel writers are sometimes apt to carry the second excuse a little too far, and favor us with perfect monsters. Sir Charles Grandison is a much more improbable character than Caliban. The

[D] ‘Even in comic composition expressions, though sometimes falling into the improbable, become probable from exciting laughter, as this, “he possessed an estate no bigger than a Lacedæmonian’s letter;” laughter being a passion though a pleasing one.’ LONGINUS, Sect. xxxviii.

[E] Note v. Chap. xxiv.

[F] Τέθναθι,—Κῆρα δ’ ἐγὼ τότε δέξομαι ὁππότε κεν δῇ.

Ζεὺς ἐθέλη τελέσαι, ἢ δ’ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι.



manners of Caliban, for what we know, may be very natural for a being composed of a witch and a fiend; but we immediately know the manners of Sir Charles Grandison are perfectly unnatural in a mere man.

Perfection of character, besides the objection [G] formerly made to it, will always be infipid and uninteresting. I am inclined to think the Helen of Zeuxis, if it were composed, as we are told it was, from a selection of the best features of the most beautiful women of Greece, could not be a very interesting piece.

The Abbe Terrasson, who seems to push the idea of perfection as far as it can reasonably go, speaking of the *Telemachus*, which he praises above all other epopees for drawing so excellent a character of a young hero, adds, 'The epic hero being proposed as a model for imitation, it is  
' not allowable to elevate him above human nature. We may leave him  
' slight failings which may even sometimes draw him into misfortunes,  
' if we chuse it, in the course of the poem. I have not therefore said,  
' that the hero of the epopee should be perfectly virtuous. I have only  
' said that he ought to be essentially virtuous.'

[G] Note III. Chap. XIII.

NOTE



## NOTE XV.

AS TO THE WAY IN WHICH CONTRADICTIONS MAY BE ANSWERED, THEY SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN THE SAME LIGHT AS CONFUTATIONS IN AN ARGUMENT. WE SHOULD OBSERVE IF THE SAME THINGS ARE SPOKEN OF, OR TO THE SAME PERSON, OR IN THE SAME MANNER.

THIS seems to be extending the same principle to account for and excuse contradictions, that is employed before (see note v. on this chapter) to excuse sentiments that seem immoral. As there the immorality is no fault unless carried to a great excess, if it proceeds from an immoral character apparently shewn so, who will not interest us in his favor; so here contradictions in opinion will be proper or improper according to the manners and sentiments of the speaker. In real life people see things in different lights according to their different habits, mode of education, or profession. A painter will not speak of a wood like a timber-merchant, or a mathematician deliver his opinion on Homer or Milton in the same terms with a poet. This the composer of fictitious fable is to imitate; and indeed from the nice discrimination of this arises the variety of serious, and the humour of comic poetry. Romeo and the Friar should not be affected in the same manner at the appearance of Juliet. Prince Henry will not address his father, Percy, and Falstaff, in the same terms. Sincerity will not be expected from Iago, or wisdom from the mouth of Malvolio. Horace exemplifies this difference of sentiment arising from difference of character in the epistle to the Pisos.

‘ Much



- ‘ Much boots the speaker’s character to mark :
- ‘ God, hero, grave old man, or hot young spark,
- ‘ Matron, or busy nurse, who’s used to roam
- ‘ Trading abroad, or plows his field at home :
- ‘ If Colchian or Assyrian fill the scene,
- ‘ Theban or Argian note the shades between [H].’

COLMAN.

## NOTE XVI.

THE REPREHENSIONS OF IMPIETY AND ABSURDITY WILL INDEED BE JUST WHEN THEY ARE INTRODUCED WITHOUT NECESSITY.

ARISTOTLE gives examples of each. Of unnecessary absurdity from the Egeus of Euripides a few fragments only of which remain; and of impiety from the character of Menelaus in the Orestes of the same poet, which he has already mentioned in the fifteenth chapter as an example of the same. Dryden, in his tragedy of Tyrannic Love, has saved us the trouble of seeking for two instances, as the character of Maximin furnishes at the same time an example of both. We should be shocked at the blasphemies he utters, if their complete absurdity did not rather incline us to laugh. I hardly know a more ridiculous circumstance even

[H] Intererit multum diuifne loquatur an heros.  
 Maturufne fenex an adhuc florente iuventâ  
 Fervidus; an matrona potens an fedula nutrix,  
 Mercatorne vagus cultorne virentis agelli,  
 Colchus an Affyrius; Thebis nutritus an Argis.

in



in Tom Thumb, than occurs in one line. He has declared war with the gods, and being from custom betrayed into an oath immediately corrects himself.

‘ Now by the gods !—By Maximin I mean.’

The author of the Letters of Literature mentions [I] a new figure of rhetoric which he calls *ἄνοια*, or UTTER ABSURDITY, a figure which he shews by examples, many writers of high reputation have made a very free use of. [K] To the instances he gives may be added the conduct of Virgil in regard to Ascanius. In the second book of the *Æneid* he is a little boy accompanying his father.

‘ Haud passibus æquis.’

‘ And with unequal paces tripp’d along.’

DRYDEN.

And in the third book Andromache, speaking of her own son, says to him,

‘ O mihi sola mei super Astyanactis imago,

‘ Sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat

‘ Et nunc æquali tecum pubesceret ævo.’

‘ In thee my lost Astyanax I trace,

‘ Such were his eyes, his form, his blooming face ;

‘ Such now, had fate decreed, his manhood’s ripening grace.’ }

Again, Virgil in one part of his fourth book makes him a child in lap, and in another an active youth following the chace on a fiery courser, and wishing to encounter a wild boar or a lion.

[I] Letter xxii.

[K] See Curiosities of Literature, Article Virgil, printed for J. Murray, 1791.

There



There is a striking instance of this figure in Tancred and Sigismunda. Sigismunda is in despair at Tancred's supposed infidelity in forsaking her and offering his hand to Constantia, after having given her the strongest assurances of unaltered attachment. At this juncture Siffredi comes in and presses his daughter to give her hand to Osmond: and to overcome her reluctance at taking this step he tries to rouse her pride, and induce her to shew the king that her heart

— ' Disdains to wear

' A chain that his has greatly thrown aside.'

A very natural argument, and which prevails afterwards in the mouth of Laura, and from whence the novel in *Gil Blas* from which the fable and part of the language of the tragedy are taken, receives its name [L].

But how does Siffredi conduct his argument?

' But above all you must root out for ever

' From the king's breast the least remain of hope,

' And henceforth make his mention'd love dishonor.'

Was not this effectually done by Tancred's match with Constantia? In fact this (to use a vulgar proverb) is letting the cat out of the bag; and acquainting his daughter with the reluctance of Tancred to obey the late king's will; and desiring her to act the very part in regard to her lover, for which she herself is so enraged against him as to run into another man's arms, merely from a principle of revenge.

[L] ' La Marriage du Vengeance.' Which Smollet (with an eye I presume to the figure in question) has rendered ' The Baleful Marriage.'

In



In these lines of Shenstone, otherwise beautiful, there is a manifest absurdity.

‘Pleasing when youth is long expired to trace

‘The forms our pencil or our pen design’d;

“Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,

“Such the soft image of our youthful mind.”

This is comparing the sister arts in a circumstance where they have not the least resemblance: the early productions of a young poet, if written from the heart, may shew the

— ‘Soft image of his youthful mind.’

But I cannot possibly see how

‘His youthful air, and shape, and face,’

can be traced in the juvenile designs of the painter.

I shall conclude these examples with one from Shakespear. In the Merchant of Venice, Portia quotes the Lord’s Prayer to persuade a Jew (calling him so only three lines before.)

‘We do pray for mercy;

‘And that same prayer doth teach us all to render

‘The deeds of mercy.’—



## NOTE XVII.

THE ANSWERS TO THESE OBJECTIONS MAY BE COLLECTED FROM  
WHAT WE HAVE SAID, AND THEY ARE TWELVE IN NUMBER.

**THOUGH** in the note on the translation I have given what appeared to me the most probable arrangement of these solutions; yet I must avow my indecision on a subject which has occasioned so many various opinions among the different commentators.



## C H A P. XXVI.

## NOTE I.

TRAGEDY ALSO AS WELL AS THE EPOPEE MAY ATTAIN ITS  
END WITHOUT REPRESENTATION, FOR WE CAN JUDGE OF ITS  
MERIT BY READING ONLY.

THIS is strictly true; and perhaps there are few good tragedies in which the effect is not in general, at least as forcible in the closet as on the stage, even in the modern theatre. In the strongly impassioned parts, where every other consideration of effect is lost in feeling, we are wonderfully moved by the natural efforts of a Garrick and a Siddons; but this is independent of the stage effect, and would be as strong in a room as on the stage. But the appearance of scene-shifters, the panting [M] dead bodies, and other circumstances of the same nature that must necessarily attend the representation, rather weaken than encrease the force of the illusion; and the exception just made can extend only to few performers. There are not many actors who are able to give us in the representation, the ideas we form of the characters of Shakespear from reading his plays. Mr. Jackson, who to the highest merit in one, adds an accurate and elegant taste in all the polite arts, says, 'I have seldom any pleasure from the representation of Shakespear's plays, unless it be from some scenes of conversation merely without passion. The speeches

[M] Note III. Chap. XI.



' which have any thing affecting in the expression are generally so over-  
' acted as to cease to be "the mirror of nature [B]."

There is in fact always something wanting in the apparatus of the drama, I mean especially in tragedy[c], to keep up the delusion. Here the painter has the advantage; he has only, it is true, a point of time to imitate, but this point he can imitate accurately. He can paint the horse starting at the dead bodies in the field of Bosworth or Agincourt; he has no need of rosin for the artificial and almost ridiculous flash of lightning which precedes the thunder of the scene-shifter; his imitative convulsions seem really to divide the clouds and threaten the wretched head of the night-wandering monarch. He can also stain the bosom of Juliet with blood without exciting our disgust, and shew us the bleeding rings from which the eyes of Gloucester have been torn without raising too violent and offensive a sensation of horror.

If such is the effect of the modern theatrical apparatus on the interest of the drama, what must have been that of the ancient with all its exaggerated and unnatural appendages? Increasing the improbability in the strongest degree, and robbing the representation of its chief effect, the natural expression of the passions, by the display of their operation on the human form and countenance through the exertions of a good actor.

If however there are few actors who are able to do justice to the characters of Shakespear, there are also few other dramatic characters who

[B] Letter XIV.

[c] This is not so much the case with comedy. A handsome room, a street, or even a view of St. James's Park, may be represented accurately enough. If the apparatus fails in comedy, it is generally not from deficiency but the contrary. See Note VIII. Chap. xv.

do



do not owe much of their merit to the exertion of the performers in general. It is not every play that justifies the observation which is the subject of this note.

Dr. Francklin, in the preface to his excellent translation of Sophocles, observes in commendation of the ancient mask, 'That the actor was not, as on our stage, left at liberty to murder fine language and sentiment by wrong accent and false pronunciation, by hurrying over some parts with precipitancy and drawling out others into a tedious monotony, a good voice and a tolerable ear were all that the poet required of him.'

Dr. Francklin forgets that this argument proves too much; since applied to a good actor the reverse is equally true. Would it be no disadvantage to dramatic effect to hide the speaking features of a Garrick behind a deformed vizard; or distort the pathetic tones of Mrs. Siddons by a speaking trumpet? Indeed the effect was tried on Mr. Garrick. The only character of Shakespear in which he could not succeed was Othello. What must have been lost from his not being able to mark by his expressive countenance, the conflict of the various passions in his bosom while Iago was working on his jealousy!

I will conclude this note with the opinion of an eminent critic on the subject. 'A fluctuation of passion and refined sentiments would have made no figure on the Grecian stage. Imagine the discording scene between Brutus and Cassius in Julius Cæsar to be there exhibited, or the handkerchief in the Moor of Venice; how slight would be their effect, when pronounced in a mask and through a pipe! The workings of nature upon the countenance, and the inflexions of voice so deeply affecting in modern representation, would have been entirely lost. If  
a great



' a great genius had arisen with talents for composing a pathetic tragedy in perfection, he would have made no figure in Greece.' HOME's Sketches of the History of Man, Book 1. Sk. v. 2.

## NOTE II.

TRAGEDY THEN HAS EVERY REQUISITE IN COMMON WITH THE EPOPEE SINCE IT MAY EQUALLY USE VERSE.

THE more I have considered this passage, the more I am confirmed in my opinion, that τὸ μέτρον means here iambic verse unaffixed by music and representation [D], and not hexameter verse in opposition to it [E]. I do not think an instance can be found in the treatise, of μέτρον being used in this appropriated sense. In the first chapter Aristotle says, some are called iambic and some elegiac poets from their metre, τὸ μέτρον; and again he speaks soon after of a poem composed in all sorts of measure (ἅπαντα τὰ μέτρα). And just before this, in the same chapter, he says the epopee imitates, either using (χρώμενη) plain words or verse of different kinds (τοῖς μέτροις) comprehending every sort of verse; or one only, ἐνί τινι τῶν μέτρων, by which he signifies hexameters, as distinguished from dithyrambics, mimes, comedy, and tragedy, who use (χρῶνται) rhythm, melody and measure. Here is exactly the same opposition marked between the means, (for μουσική in the passage before us includes both rhythm and melody); why then should not τὸ μέτρον equally signify verse in general in both passages? Aristotle in the first chapter employs χρῶνται to express the use that dithyrambics, mimes, tragedy, and comedy, make

[D] See this Chapter, Note [G] on the translation.

[E] See Note [A] on the translation, Chap. XXIII.



of their whole powers, rhythm, melody and measure. Surely then, when he chose afterwards to shew what one of these species of imitative poetry could effect when 'shorn of half its rays,' when making itself equal to the epopee by laying aside the music and the scenery and apparatus of the theatre, which, as well here as in the sixth chapter he allows to be the most affecting part of the drama: surely if, in the first place, he employs *χρῆνται* to express the use these compositions do make of all their powers: by what words could he so well express the power tragedy MIGHT have of attaining its end contrary to the general practice by using one only, as *ἔχει χρῆσθαι* [P]?

It is true Aristotle does, in the first chapter, hypothetically put the case of an epopee in trimeter or elegiac verse, but with apparent disapprobation on the same principle as he undoubtedly would a tragedy in hexameters had he taken occasion to suppose one, from nature herself having pointed out the metre congenial with each. If therefore the critic means to say, we will give up the advantage the more simple cadence of iambics affords us in affecting the passions, and attack the epopee in the more ornamented and less natural language of hexameters; surely the advocate for the epopee in return might say, we will lay aside what advantage we derive from the richer cadence of hexameter verse, and contend with tragedy in iambics.

Let us revert to the context and examine the drift of Aristotle's whole reasoning on the subject taken together. He first says, if acting is a

[P] If it had been the usual custom in Greece to recite tragedy as the French drama is now recited by Tessier, then, and then only would the word *χρῆνται* (as suggested by Mr. Winstanley,) have been the proper word to express this sense of the passage.

disadvantage



disadvantage to tragedy it is equally so to the epopee, which may also be accompanied (and he produces instances) by gesture, and even singing. If the action of tragedy may be rendered ridiculous by exaggerated gesture, so he says may the epopee; if the epopee has the advantage of working its effect by reading or recitation only, and is therefore more perfect in itself and less dependent on adventitious ornament, tragedy possesses the same power and can also manifest its own intrinsic merit by perusal alone. Tragedy therefore has not only every advantage in common with the epopee, for it may be capable of producing its intended effect by using its own ornamented language only, independent of representation, scenery and music; but it has the additional advantage of all these embellishments in contradistinction, I suppose, to the simple recitative to which the epopee was set when it happened to be sung. With these superior powers, its effect in producing the passions of pity and terror was rendered stronger, or, to use the words of Mr. Twining, 'The illusion was heightened.' Therefore tragedy was in every respect equal and in many superior to epic poetry.

This appears to be the general sense and connection of the whole argument. All the examples are drawn from what WAS, not from what might BE. The decision here does not rest on the powers that both the drama and the epopee really possess, or on any license they can have of exchanging their natural and essential requisites (one [G] of which their respective verse is said to be) but on the mode of exhibition. Had any superiority been suggested which the epopee might be supposed to derive from the gravity and magnificence of its measure, and it had been answered in the words of the passage in question, the sense contended for might

[G] See the beginning of Chap. XXIV.



have been allowed. Though even then τὸ μέτρον would have been a very improper term to signify a particular kind of verse in opposition to any other, it having been so very often used for verse in general in this treatise. Besides, if it had this meaning, [H] it MIGHT, not, it MAY use, seems to be the proper phrase.

Indeed if Aristotle had once proceeded to give the preference to tragedy from what it might be made, the objector to Aristotle's decision in favour of tragedy, might have answered, that there was an equal possibility of giving the advantage of music and representation to the epopee. It would certainly have been very possible to act the dialogues of Homer, omitting the other parts, or throwing them into a chorus, in which the Coryphæus might repeat all that the poet says in his own person. In short, if we come to judge of what a thing is, from what it may possibly be made, by changing its essential properties, we may prove any thing.

As I differ here with Mr. Winstanley, neither can I agree with what Mr. Twining says on this subject in a note [I] on a passage in chap. iv. (which I quote in the words of his own translation). 'The iambic is of all metres the most colloquial, as appears evidently from this fact, that our common conversation frequently falls into iambic verse, seldom into hexameter, and only when we depart from the usual melody of speech [K].'

Of

[H] ἔξεστι, not ἔξεστι, χρῆσθαι. Liceat, not licet, uti.

[I] Note 36.

[K] Mr. Twining cites a passage in his note from the Treatise on Rhetoric, L. III. Chap. VIII. as corroborating this, which I certainly must think it does, if pointed properly; but as it is now generally pointed and translated it directly contradicts it, as well as itself.



Of this Mr. Twining observes, in his note (36), 'It has been  
' thought strange that Aristotle should introduce here the mention of  
' hexameters when he has been speaking only of trochaic and iambic  
' verse, and is accounting for the adoption of the latter in preference,  
' not to the hexameter but to the trochaic tetrameter, and it has there-  
' fore been doubted whether we should not read [L] τετράμετρα. But  
' the established reading I believe is right. The trochaic tetrameter  
' Aristotle has both here and in his Rhetoric characterized as σατυρικόν,  
' ὀρχησικώτερον, προχερόν, and even κορδακικώτερον. He did not, I believe,  
' consider it as being in any degree λεκτικόν. It was therefore entirely  
' out of the question, when a metre proper for the general dialogue of  
' tragedy was to be sought for, but the hexameter was not so; and it

Τῶν δὲ ῥυθμῶν ὁ μὲν ἥρωος σεμνὸς καὶ λεκτικὸς καὶ ἀρμονίας δεόμενος· ὁ δὲ ἱαμβὸς αὐτὴν  
ἔστιν ἢ λέξις ἢ τῶν πολλῶν, διὸ μάλιστα πάντων τῶν μετρῶν ἱαμβεῖα φθείρονται λέγοντες,  
δεῖ δὲ σεμνότητα γενέσθαι καὶ ἐκστῆσαι. In the Poetic we are told hexameter verse seldom is  
spoken accidentally, 'unless we depart from the natural harmony of discourse,' ἐκβαίνοντες  
τῆς λεκτικῆς ἀρμονίας, and just before, that the iambic is of all verse the most colloquial,  
μάλιστα γὰρ λεκτικὸν τῶν μέτρων. This, the passage in the rhetoric, as it is now pointed and  
read, directly contradicts, but all will be consistent if the stop is placed after σεμνός, and none  
after δεόμενος, rendering it thus. 'Of all metres the heroic is the most grave, but the  
' iambic is both colloquial and deficient in harmony, and is indeed the language of the vulgar,  
' on which account, of all measures, it is chiefly spoken in common conversation, but here, (in  
' rhetoric,) it ought to be made grave and be elevated.' Meaning, that oratory should have  
more dignity, and be raised above the level of common speech; and clearly I think of the two,  
preferring the hexameter to the iambic cadence for that purpose. 'Cum sint numeri plures,  
' iambum et trochæum frequentem segregat ab oratore Aristoteles, qui naturâ tamen incurrunt  
' ipsi in orationem sermonemque nostrum: sed sunt insignes percussiones eorum numerorum, et  
' minuti pedes. Quare primum ad heroum nos dactyli et anapæsti & spondæi pedem invitat.'  
CICERO DE ORAT. L. III.

[L] Note on Winstanley's edition, page 277.



‘might, without absurdity, be asked by an objector, as Castlevetro and Piccolomini have observed, why that species of verse was not adopted, especially as the tragic poets were the successors of the epic or heroic; and Homer, according to Plato, was the first of tragic poets. As its character was grave and stately, it might seem on that account well adapted to tragedy, where indeed we actually find it occasionally introduced. But Aristotle objects to it as less proper, because though *σεμνὸν*, it was at the same time, *εὐλεπτικόν*. He allows, however, that it was not so remote from the rhythm of common speech, but that it MIGHT be casually produced like the iambic, though it rarely happened. He even goes so far as to allow, in his concluding chapter, that tragedy “might adopt the epic metre.” This last sentence is Mr. Twining’s translation of the passage in question.

The whole drift of the part of Aristotle, in the fourth chapter, which I have quoted from Mr. Twining, and on which the above is his note, appears to me exactly this. In the rude state of the drama the trochaic tetrameter was used as the measure. When tragedy was more cultivated, and assumed a more serious and dignified tone, this metre was found improper, and another was to be adopted, when nature herself pointed out the iambic as most proper, from its being most congenial with common discourse, which the dialogue of tragedy was to resemble as nearly as possible consistently with its dignity [M], since the mode of its imitation was by persons acting, and the objects of its imitation the actions of persons, of superior situation indeed, but in those particular circumstances which are incident to persons of all ranks, on which alone

[M] See Chapters II. III. and XIII. *CICERO DE ORAT. I. III. TARSUS*



the interest of the action can be founded. Whereas hexameter verse, though the proper language of the epopee, which had greater dignity and variety, and was not intended or calculated to awaken so strong an interest, could not be adapted to the drama as being too much at variance with common discourse to fall casually into it, except when the language was elevated above the usual cadence of conversation, which I conceive the dialogue of tragedy, and especially the interesting parts of it, should never be. If, as Mr. Twining seems to suppose, Aristotle, when he says, speech never falls into hexameters but when it exceeds its usual harmony, means, by its usual harmony, (τῆς λεκτικῆς ἁρμονίας) [N] ‘not that  
 ‘lax and general sense in which we commonly apply it to the rhythm of  
 ‘speech when we talk of the harmony of a verse or period.’ But that melody and rhythm which speech possesses, as well as music, and which ‘in  
 ‘speech, animated by passion, are so modified as to approach more or less  
 ‘perceptibly to musical melody and rhythm;’ and that ‘the Greeks  
 ‘seldom or never departed so far from the usual rhythm of speech as to  
 ‘run into hexameter verse, except when they were led by the same  
 ‘cause,’ (the superior animation of the language by passion) ‘to depart  
 ‘equally from its usual melody and tones.’ If this be Aristotle’s meaning; if impassioned language is most liable of all other to fall naturally into hexameter verse, then hexameter verse must be pointed out by nature for the verse best adapted to it by nature, and especially for those parts of it from which its end, the exciting pity and terror are chiefly if not solely derived.

I own I am inclined to think that by exceeding the harmony of common speech, Aristotle means quitting the usual level of discourse for

[N] Continuation of the above quoted note of Mr. Twining.



the more elevated style of oratory, which might more naturally fall into the cadence of hexameters [o].

## NOTE III.

AND TRAGEDY POSSESSES ANOTHER ADVANTAGE IN CONFINING THE ACTION BY WHICH THE END OF THE IMITATION IS ATTAINED WITHIN A NARROWER COMPASS. FOR BEING AS IT WERE CONDENSED, IT BECOMES MORE INTERESTING THAN IF IT WERE PROTRACTED THROUGH A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME.

IN the course of these notes I have more than once had occasion to remark how much, in all works of imitation, interest depends on detail, and here the superiority of the drama is eminently apparent. Choosing only a small, and that the most affecting part of a tale, it is at full liberty to bring even the most minute circumstance from which interest may arise, into full view, without at all injuring the natural unity of time, or the proportional length of the other parts.

Besides, the events and their causes are never so far removed from each other as to lose one link of connexion; nor are the passions allowed to cool from being interrupted by intervening incidents.

It also derives another great advantage from the shortness of the composition. A tragedy may be read, and always is represented, without

[o] See the above quotation from Arist. Rhet. and Cic. de Orat.



any interruption, a thing impossible in the epopee, by which the impression is made much stronger; and the connexion of the events, the dependence of the parts on each other, and the result of the catastrophe from the whole, is much more readily comprehended, and more easily remembered. The shortest novel is seldom read but at intervals. Perhaps it is to avoid, or at least lessen this disadvantage, that Aristotle proposes reducing the length of the epopee [P] to that of the number of tragedies usually performed without intermission. But I imagine it would not have effected the end. However an Athenian audience might have been fascinated by the music, the acting, the scenery, and the company [Q], to sit so many hours during the representation of a favorite spectacle, I much doubt if they would have listened so long to the recitation of an epic poem, or have perused it so long with attention.

[P] See Note II. Chap. XIV.

[Q] The convenience of the ancient theatre for conversation, and the portico allotted for the purpose of walking and conversing (between the intervals of the different pieces I presume,) is explained at large by M. Boindin, in his Dissertation on the Ancient Theatres, in les *Memoires de l'Academi des Inscriptions*, Tom. I. p. 136. In the modern theatre the spectators are nailed to their seats during the whole performance, if the house is full; and a single spectator, seated among strangers, is in this country at least, engaged in almost as solitary an amusement as reading in his closet.



## NOTE IV.

THE ILIAD AND ODYSSEY ARE AS MUCH THE IMITATION OF ONE ACTION AS THE NATURE OF THE COMPOSITION WOULD ADMIT.

THE action of the Iliad has been blamed as defective in point of unity; a censure, I confess, that does not seem easily answered. The anger of Achilles, which is the avowed subject of the poem, is transferred from Agamemnon to Hector, producing two different actions, one of which terminates with the reconciliation of Achilles and Agamemnon, the other with the death of Hector.

The unity of the poem cannot arise from the anger only, which is a quality, and which can only be considered as the cause of the action to which unity is necessary. If the character of Achilles which is anger, be uniformly kept up through ten different actions, will it follow that such uniformity will be sufficient to give the proper epic unity to them all? If so, the authors of the Theſeid and the Héracleid were right, who thought a poem possessed a proper degree of unity if it related to one person [R].

Bosſu tries to answer the objection in this manner. ‘ These two parts of the Iliad are joined very regularly. If Achilles had not been

[R] See Chap. VIII.



‘ incensed against Agamemnon, he would have fought himself, and not  
 ‘ have exposed his friend alone against Hector in his armour, which was  
 ‘ the cause of the rashness and death of that friend; and further, to  
 ‘ blend the two parts better with each other, the second begins a long  
 ‘ time before we see what will be the end of the first. All the condi-  
 ‘ tions of reconciliation are proposed on the part of Agamemnon, before  
 ‘ the death of Patroclus, and even before he thinks of engaging in the  
 ‘ battle. The consent of Achilles is wanted alone, and his not giving  
 ‘ it till after the death of Patroclus connects it with that of Hector; and  
 ‘ we may truly say, that the rage and vengeance of Achilles against  
 ‘ Hector, which is the second part of the poem, is the only cause of the  
 ‘ reconciliation which finishes the first part.’ TREATISE ON THE  
 EPIC POEM, Part I. Book II. Chap. VII.

I own the force of this reasoning does not strike me. If any event connected even intimately with the catastrophe, which is the foundation of a new action, however congenial with the former, is sufficient to unite the two actions so as to produce the epic unity, with a very little management the Iliad and Odyssey might have been so united. And on this principle the Fairy Queen may be called a regular epopee.

I cannot but think the reconciliation of Achilles and Agamemnon, however brought about, is the solution of the plot of the Iliad as the death of Turnus is of the Æneid. But we have before [s] observed, that every catastrophe must be defective which leaves us in doubt as to the fate of the principal characters, as far as it is connected, or arises from the action; in which respect the catastrophe of the Æneid is

[s] Note I. Chap. VII.

faulty.



faulty. This error Homer, who judged better of human feelings, avoided. In the words of Mr. Hume, ' Though it is evident that in the course of his narrative he exceeds the first proposition of his subject, and that the anger of Achilles, which caused the death of Hector, is not the same with that which produced so many ills to the Greeks. Yet the strong connexion between these two movements, the quick translation from one to another, the contrast between the effects of concord and discord among the princes, and the natural curiosity we have to see Achilles in action after such long repose, all these causes carry on the reader, and produce a sufficient unity in the subject.' HUME'S ESSAY ON THE ASSOCIATION OF IDEAS, Sect. III.

After what I have said on this matter, I must add, that though I cannot possibly agree with the Stagirite, in thinking that the Iliad is as much the imitation of one action as the nature of the epopee will admit; yet I by no means wish it other than it is, or would sacrifice the seven last books of it to the observation of any critical rule whatever.

## NOTE V.

IF TRAGEDY THEN EXCELS IN ALL THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, AS WELL AS IN THE EFFECT WHICH IT IS THE PECULIAR END OF THE POETIC ART TO ATTAIN—IT WILL CERTAINLY BE MORE EXCELLENT THAN THE EPOPEE FROM ATTAINING THE END OF THE ART ITSELF MORE EFFECTUALLY.

VOLTAIRE, who is never so happy as when he can with any plausibility of argument oppose any opinion that is generally received by



the literary world, and especially if it has the function of antiquity, has chosen to attack the position laid down here by Aristotle, that the attaining a proposed end effectually, is any source of beauty or excellence.

He says, ' I was present one day with a philosopher at the performance of a tragedy. " How fine this is !" said he. I replied, " What strikes you as being so fine ?" He answered, " The author has attained his end." The next day he took physic, which did him good. " Well," said I, " it has attained its end. What a beautiful dose of physic !" He found from this that we could not call a dose of physic beautiful, and that to give the name of beautiful to a thing, it is necessary that it should excite admiration and pleasure. He agreed that the tragedy had inspired him with both those sensations, and that in this consisted τὸ καλόν, THE BEAUTIFUL.

' We took a voyage to England. We there saw the same piece performed, perfectly translated. It set all the spectators yawning. " O ho," said he, " I see the τὸ καλόν is not the same for the English as for the French." After many reflections, he concluded that THE BEAUTIFUL is sometimes very relative, as what is decent at Japan may be indecent at Rome, and what is fashionable at Paris may be unfashionable at Pekin. And he saved himself the trouble of writing a long treatise on THE BEAUTIFUL.' QUESTIONS SUR L'ENCYCLOPEDIE, Art. BEAU.

Voltaire then proceeds, that actions and sentiments in themselves apparently virtuous, will meet with universal approbation, but that the beautiful and the excellent, in matters of taste, are merely arbitrary, depending entirely on local manners, habits, and prejudices.

Le



Le Pere Brumoy has examined this subject in the preface to his *Théâtre des Grecs*, where this reasoning of Voltaire may be fairly said to be answered, and in great measure confuted, though the publication of Brumoy's work was anterior in point of time to this of Voltaire. As the passage of Brumoy is drawn to some length, I shall just state the heads of it, leaving those who wish to see the whole of the argument to recur to the work itself.

He first defines truth and beauty, as far as regards works of genius, like tragedy, to be such an imitation of nature, as shall affect the minds of a polished people so that they may from their natural feelings say of it, 'This is consonant with truth; this is fine.' He says a polished people, because in fact education varies the interest and objects of the passions. And in this he is certainly right, though Mr. Voltaire chuses to say an action really and eminently virtuous will equally be applauded by a Savage, a Frenchman, and a Chinese. Of the feelings of the first and last I can say nothing. As to the second, I confess I entertain no very high opinion of their taste for the simple and natural truth and beauty of composition, though I do not say with Voltaire that they are a nation of monkeys and tigers [T].

But if I take the educated and uneducated of my own country, (and the distinction is necessary in all countries, for no man who can read a tragedy will keep sheep upon Salisbury plain,) the first will sympathize with scenes that paint to him events of real exquisite distress, of which the other, however good and honest he may be in his situation of life,

[T] 'Ne pourrais je sortir au plus vite de ce pays, ou les singes, agacent les tigres.'

CANDIDE, Chap. XXII.



can no more form an idea, than a critic whose opinions are sophisticated by false notions of refinement can form of the truth, the beauty, and the simplicity of natural pictures, of human actions and passions, unadorned by meretricious ornaments.

But to return to Brumoy. He exemplifies the difference between natural and local feelings, by an analysis of the tragedy of *Alceste*. 'If Euripides,' he says, 'has drawn in that work a true picture of human nature; if he awakens our sensibility for the tenderness of a woman, who voluntarily sacrifices her own life to prolong that of her husband; if my senses are deluded by the most studied exertion of art, without that art being apparent; if he offers to my view an action at the same time simple, connected, and probable; if he leads me insensibly, by the clue of my feelings, through a maze of passion, that continues gradually increasing till the impression is perfect, and I entirely deliver up my sensations to the illusion of the scene, I become myself an Athenian; I cannot refrain, in spite of a few defects in the piece, which strike me as well as the rest of the spectators, from joining my own applause to those of Greece, since being a man like the Greeks, I must be necessarily affected by the same truths, and the same beauties, which have made so lively an impression on them.'

He then adds, 'If without considering the general beauties in the piece, which must affect us as men, we look only to the parts which are contrary to our habits and manners as Frenchmen, we may indeed exclaim, What can be the propriety of this god, who is the slave of a man; this infernal deity who seizes his prize; this law authorized by Apollo, that the old should die for the young, the father for the son? What, shall a son lose his respect for a father, because he  
' refuses



' refuses to submit to such a law [v] ? What shall we say of Hercules  
 ' getting drunk while the funeral rites of Alcestes are performing ? Is  
 ' there any sense in the combat between Hercules and Death, and his  
 ' recovering Alcestes from him, and her continuing dumb for three days  
 ' afterwards ? All this will, undoubtedly, appear ridiculous and absurd.  
 ' But what would Euripides say, were he to be present at the represen-  
 ' tation of Racine's Iphigenia. He would be charmed with the copy  
 ' of what Greece had admired in the original. But what would he  
 ' have said of the episode of Eriphyle ; of the French gallantry of  
 ' Achilles ; of the threatened duel ; of the tête-a-tête between a prince  
 ' and princess ; and Clytemnestra falling at the feet of Achilles ? He  
 concludes the argument by saying, ' that we have no more real reason  
 ' to be shocked at the painting of Grecian manners as they were, how-  
 ' ever strange they may seem to us, than succeeding times will have to  
 ' think our customs extravagant, because they may become obsolete.  
 ' The decision of justice, by the sword, was once as prevalent in Europe  
 ' as the decision of honor. Why may they not in succeeding times be  
 ' considered as equally absurd ?'

In all probability the passages in the French writers, which occur so  
 frequently in deification of monarchy, will be as disgusting to a French  
 audience as the extraordinary effusions of a blind loyalty, expressed in the  
 Maid's Tragedy, the Loyal Subject, and Valentinian of Beaumont and  
 Fletcher are now to an English one. To the honor of Shakespear and  
 his royal patroness, few such degrading sentiments occur in his works.  
 He makes a virtuous prince hesitate even to extend mercy to one he  
 thinks an object of it,

[v] The scene alluded to here certainly can never fall under the circumstance of local  
 impropriety only. The perusal of it must equally shock the feelings of all mankind, what-  
 ever their country or education. It is a gross and radical defect, in a tragedy which on the  
 whole I prefer to every other production of the Greek drama.

' Because



— ‘ Because it is against his laws,  
 ‘ Against his crown, his oath, his dignity,  
 ‘ Which princes, would they, may not disannul.’

## COMEDY OF ERRORS.

As le Pere Brumoy has not chosen to give the decision of Euripides as to Iphigenia of Racine, I will take the liberty of doing it for him. ‘ I confess,’ we may suppose him to say, ‘ that some of your customs and manners seem strange to me, as I have no doubt some of ours do to you: and had you laid the scene at Paris, as I did in Greece, adopting the radical manners of the persons and the essential parts of the fable, but changing the names and local customs, as an English poet did in regard to my Alcestes [u], I could have found no fault; but as you have chosen to keep the same story and names, you ought to have given the piece also Greek manners. The customs of Greece are too well known in modern Europe, and especially in a neighbouring island, a formidable rival to you in arts as well as in arms, not to make this conduct in general ridiculous, though your extreme partiality for your own manners may blind you to it [x]. You have broken one of the rules of Aristotle, to which you affect to pay so much deference, and which deserve it when they are, as in this instance, drawn from truth and nature, exemplified in the works of the best poets. You have committed an

[u] Thomson’s Edward and Eleonora.

[x] Those who will be more inclined to believe the character of his countrymen given by a Frenchman, as to this particular, than by Euripedes, may turn to the eleventh letter of M. Guy’s VOYAGE LITTERAIRE DE LA GRECE. Speaking of Tournefort’s attempt to teach a Greek, chief interpreter to the Sultan, the true pronunciation of his own language, he says, ‘ I here see a Frenchman, who would give the TON to a stranger in every thing.’

‘ essential



‘ essential error in point of manners ; you have not made them [y] like ;  
 ‘ you might with as much propriety have dressed Achilles like a captain  
 ‘ of grenadiers, and armed his Myrmidons with firelocks.’

To return to the position of Voltaire, that the fitness of a thing to fulfil its end effectually has no influence on its beauty ; I shall oppose to it an opinion from the writings of a man, which perhaps may have as much weight with some of my readers as those of the philosopher of Ferney, though they may not be in general quite so popular at present. Cicero, in his third book de Oratore, says, [z] ‘ In most things it is  
 ‘ wonderfully contrived by nature, that those objects which are of the  
 ‘ greatest utility, should possess also, not only the greatest dignity but often  
 ‘ also the greatest beauty and elegance.’ And again speaking of art [A],  
 ‘ What are so necessary in navigation as the sides of the vessel, the keel,  
 ‘ the prow, the stern, the yards, the sails, the masts, &c. ? And yet all  
 ‘ these have so much beauty and elegance in their form, that they seem  
 ‘ as much invented for pleasure as for utility.’

To leave authority let us consult our own observation. What is it that pleases us in the Farnese Hercules, or the Apollo Belvidere, but the appearance of strength in the one, and dignity of expression with symmetry

[y] Τὸ ὁμοίον. ‘Famam sequere.’ See Chap. xv.

[z] ‘ In plerisque rebus incredibiliter hoc natura est ipsa fabricata—ut ea quæ maximum  
 ‘ utilitatem in se continerent, eadem haberent plurimum vel dignitatis vel sæpe etiam venustatis.’

[A] ‘ Quid tam in navigio necessarium quam latera, quam carinæ, quam prora, quam pup-  
 ‘ pis, quam antennæ, quam vela, quam mali, quam reliqua ? quæ tamen hanc habent in  
 ‘ specie venustatem, ut non solum salutis sed etiam voluptatis causa inventa esse videantur.’

of



of form indicating activity in the other? The same may be applied to animals. When we admire the hunter, the charger, and the racehorse, the greyhound and the mastiff, do we not consider their fitness to excel in the several exercises to which they are appropriated, as the principal source of their beauty? When we speak of a fine regiment do we consider the rapidity yet regularity of its movement, the steadiness of its position, the closeness of the fire, and the exactness of the aim as beautiful only in themselves, or do we not take into our ideas at the same time their use, and consider them as carrying destruction and terror into the ranks of the enemies of their country?

Perhaps this is no where more evident than in the judgement we pass on female beauty. It has been already slightly alluded [B] to. It is a delicate subject to investigate; and I shall rather chuse to rest my argument again in great measure on authority, than entirely hazard my own opinion.

The elegant author of the Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful [C] has partly adopted the same notion with Voltaire. He says 'our notion of fitness has nothing to do with beauty.' But I think, on examining what he says of female beauty, it will be found that fitness has more connection with our conceptions of it, even on Mr. Burke's own principles, than he chuses to allow. 'If beauty (he says) in our own species was annexed to use, men would be much more lovely than

[B] Note II. Chap. VII.

[C] THE BEAUTIFUL, LE BEAU, τὸ καλόν, taken in the general sense in which the expression is usually employed in speaking of poetry and the other congenial arts, comprehends both the SUBLIME and BEAUTIFUL, as distinguished by Mr. Burke

'women;



\* women; and strength and agility would be considered as the only  
 \* beauties. ESSAY ON THE SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL, Part III.  
 Sect. IV. I do not think the author has exactly considered the different  
 lights in which we see male and female beauty; if he had, perhaps he  
 would not have been so decided in this opinion. I conceive a young  
 officer sees his company and his mistress exactly as to beauty according  
 to their fitness, as far as he is concerned with it. Strength, activity, and  
 height are the chief beauties that he admires in the men whom he is to  
 lead on to danger, and on whose exertions he must depend for safety,  
 honor and victory: delicacy, softness, in a word, beauty, as applied by  
 way of eminence to perfection in the female form, in the woman who  
 is the object of that passion which is stronger and dearer than safety,  
 honor, or victory.

Mr. Burke proceeds. 'I appeal to the first and most natural feelings  
 \* of mankind, whether on beholding a beautiful eye, or a well-fashioned  
 \* mouth, or a well-turned leg, any ideas of their being well fitted for  
 \* seeing, eating, or running ever present themselves.' Certainly no.  
 But if I have not sufficiently explained myself in the observation imme-  
 diately preceding this quotation, Dryden shall do it for me. Celadon in  
 the Maiden Queen, after kissing a lady, says, 'Ay, marry! this was the  
 \* original use of lips; talking, eating, and drinking came in by the bye.'

Mr. Burke says again, Part III. Sect. xv. 'Observe that part of a  
 \* beautiful woman where perhaps she is most beautiful, about her neck  
 \* and breasts: the smoothness, the softness, the easy and insensible swell,  
 \* the variety of the surface which is never for the smallest space the same,  
 \* the deceitful maze through which the unsteady eye slides giddily with-  
 \* out knowing where to fix, or whither it is carried!'



This is warm painting, and speaks to the feelings, I believe, both of reader and writer. But Ovid I think has clearly shewn its end by this verse,

‘ *Forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi.*’

If the beauty of this enchanting object depended on the circumstances of its form only, as described in the glowing colors of the writer, independent of any other sensation, it would in every case be equally pleasing. But I conceive it will be sufficiently obvious to every man who will ask himself the question, that this form lovely and enchanting as it is where nature has placed it, would have no such extraordinary and self-evident beauty as the critic has ascribed to it, in any other situation.

The subject is resumed in Part III. Sect. XVI. ‘ The beauty of women is [D] considerably owing to their weakness and delicacy, and is ever enhanced by their timidity, a quality of mind analogous to it. I would not here be understood, that weakness betraying very bad health has any share in beauty; but the ill effect of this is not because it is weakness, but because the ill state of health which produces such weakness alters the other conditions of beauty. The parts in such a state collapse, the bright color, the *lumen purpureum juventæ*, is gone, and the fine variation is lost in wrinkles, sudden breaks, and right lines.’

I think if Mr. Burke had not been led away by hypothesis he would not have ended his argument by that figure which is now called a trueism. If ill health produces the consequences of old age, the effects will be the same on the beauty of a female form. But I contend, that without

[D] See Note II. Chap. VII.



this effect languor produced by sickness will destroy female beauty. [E] Delicacy, softness, effeminacy, are great and essential beauties in a woman, both in her form and manners; even languor has its enchantments: but the instant we know, or fancy even, that these proceed from ill health, the charm is broken; the person may be an object of our pity, our esteem, or even our love, taken in its cooler sense, but ceases to be the object of our passion. Shenstone justly observes, 'Health is beauty, and the most perfect health the most perfect beauty. A florid look to appear beautiful must be the bloom of health and not the glow of a fever.' Whence arises it, that the same appearance should be either beautiful or disgusting according to the causes from which it arises? The answer I think compleatly establishes, in this case at least, the position of Aristotle. For sickness must always be attended with circumstances very unfavourable to the ideas of a lover. The ladies are sometimes apt to

[E] 'Voici une consequence de la constitution des sexes; c'est que le plus fort soit le maitre en apparence, et dépende en effet du plus foible, et cela, non par un frivole usage de galanterie, ni par une orgueilleuse générosité, de protecteur, mais par une invariable loi de la nature qui donnant a la femme plus de facilité d'exciter les desirs qu'à l'homme de les satisfaire, fait dependre celui ci malgré qu'il en ait, du bon plaisir de l'autre, et le contraint de chercher a son tour a lui plaire, pour obtenir qu'elle consente a le laisser être le plus fort. Alors ce qu'il y a de plus doux pour l'homme dans sa victoire, est de douter si c'est la foiblesse qui cede à la force, ou si c'est la volonté qui se rend; et la ruse ordinaire de la femme est de laisser toujours ce doute entre elle et lui. L'esprit des femmes réponde en ceci parfaitement a leur constitution: loin de rougir de leur foiblesse, elles en font gloire; leurs tendres muscles sont sans resistance; elles affectent de ne pouvoir soulever les plus legers fardeaux; elles auroient honte d'être fortes; pourquoi cela? ce n'est pas seulement pour paroître délicates, c'est par une precaution plus adroite; elles se ménagent de loin des excuses, et le droit d'être foibles au besoin.' EMILE, Tome II. Partie II.



mistake this in regard to themselves, but I believe it never escapes their observation with respect to our sex[F].

After all, there is something so problematical in this subject, and so many circumstances occur that militate against the hypothesis I have advanced, that I by no means hazard what I have said as a decided opinion. That all utility is not beauty will be obvious from many circumstances. That sometimes even it is in direct opposition to it is equally obvious. There is perhaps no prospect so displeasing as that of a newly enclosed country, especially if enclosed by stone walls, which are particularly calculated to answer their purpose. Every man of taste will exclaim with the poet,

‘ What joy the country’s native form to see,

‘ From ploughs, and aught of human culture free [G].’

Enclosures have their beauties, but it is when the scene of cultivation is concealed by the luxuriant foliage of the irregular hedges, and the trees whose shade injures the growth of the fences, but gives to the whole country an appearance of forest.

[F] We must however here take into our account the disgust we receive from weakness and delicacy in men from whatever cause it arises; but this is because, like rough manners in a woman, they are out of character. Effeminacy in the form of a man can only be fully obviated by a behaviour perfectly manly, and a profession of danger and fatigue, the merit of which may then even be heightened by the contrast. We view with particular complacency the conduct of a youth, who,

‘ When he might act the woman in the scene,

‘ Has proved best man i’ the field.’

CORIOLANUS.

[G] — ‘ Juvat arva videre

‘ Non rastris, hominum non ulli obnoxia curæ.

VIRGIL.

The intended alteration of New Forest may add to its utility, but it certainly will be at the expence of its beauty.

In



In this concluding passage Aristotle fairly avows that predilection for tragedy, which he partly opened very early in this treatise [H], and which he has been gradually preparing us for, throughout the whole course of the work.

Nevertheless, the decided superiority over the epopee which Aristotle has here given to tragedy, has not been confirmed by the general suffrage of mankind. But then it must be allowed, they have not judged it on the same principles. General criticism has pronounced (and I think very justly) that a good epopee is the highest effort of human genius. It is certain that an epic poem affords room for the exertion of every power of the mind; and, as Johnson observes in his life of Milton, 'The first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epic poem, as it requires an assemblage of all the powers which are singly sufficient for other composition.'

To account for Aristotle's decision, I imagine he considered the comparative merit of the epopee in a different light; that, I mean, of its ability to attain effectually its purposed end. What this end is, has nowhere been mentioned. Mr. Twining supposes it to be 'the production of admiration by a grandeur of design, and variety of important incidents sustained by all the energy and minute particularity of description' (note 277). I readily agree that these are the means of adorning the parts which, taken together, conduce to the end, and which may be compared with the music and the [I] scenery of tragedy. But  
on

[H] See the conclusion of the fifth chapter.

[I] Fielding puts this analogy into the mouth of Parson Adams. 'I shall mention but one thing more which that great critic (Aristotle, Ch. vi.) in his division of tragedy, called the  
opsis



on examining the words of Aristotle, we can I think by no means consider them in his idea, as being the end of the epopee in the same manner that the exciting pity and terror is the end of tragedy [κ]. If the end to be attained by each poem were to be distinct, how could we possibly judge of their comparative merit, unless he had shewn us particularly what was the distinct end of the epopee? In which case their excellence must have been determined by one of these circumstances. Either the epopee must have been shewn not to have powers so adequate to execute its own peculiar design, as those of tragedy were to excite pity and terror: or else some reason must be given, why the end of one was in itself superior to the other. But the argument all along rests on the deficiency of the means; and this deficiency of the means is expressly said to arise from the epopee not being so compressed as tragedy; on which account tragedy becomes more interesting [L] than if it were extended through a longer space of time. This manifestly proves a great similitude, if not an absolute identity in the end of both. And if grandeur of design, variety of incidents, and minuteness of description were considered as the destined object of the epopee, there could have been no opposition between their

‘opsis or scenery, and which is as proper to the epic as to the drama with this difference, that in the former it falls to the share of the poet, and in the latter to that of the painter.’ JOSEPH ANDREWS, Book III. Chap. II. In the same speech he says, ‘neither Aristotle nor Horace give it (the Iliad) any preference, as I remember, to the Odyssey.’ See Note I. on Chap. XXIV.

[κ] Aristotle expressly says in the beginning of the twenty-fourth chapter, that except the music and scenery, the parts of the epopee and tragedy are the same; and that they both should possess peripetia, discovery and pathos: now it is obvious that pity and terror, the production of which is declared to be the design and end of tragedy, must be derived from these three circumstances.

[L] ἡδίων. See Note III. Chap. XIX.

merits



merits in this case, since dilation would be as absolutely and indispensably necessary to produce the pleasure which [M] ought to rise from one species of imitation, as compression would to that of the other.

I think the last paragraph of what may be called the work itself, establishes, almost beyond a doubt, that Aristotle considered the end of both kinds of composition as the same. This I will quote in the words of Mr. Twining's translation, as it not only gives a stronger support to this opinion than mine, but must be entirely free from any supposed bias towards an hypothesis which he himself opposes.

' If then tragedy be superior to the epic in all these respects, and also  
' in the peculiar end at which it aims [N] (for each species ought to afford, not any kind of pleasure indiscriminately, but such only as has  
' been pointed out) it evidently follows, that tragedy, as it attains more  
' effectually the end of the art itself, must deserve the preference.'

As we are referred here to what has been before pointed out, what can this be, except that mentioned in Mr. Twining's note? or how can it EVIDENTLY FOLLOW, that tragedy deserves the preference from attaining the end of the [O] ART ITSELF more effectually, if Aristotle has not

[M] Δεῖ γὰρ ἔ τὴν τυχεῖσαν ἡδονὴν ποιεῖν αὐτὰς, ἀλλὰ τὴν εἰρημενῆν.

[N] That is, 'according to Aristotle's principles, to give "THAT PLEASURE WHICH ARISES  
" FROM PITY AND TERROR THROUGH IMITATION." ' See p. 90. (Ch. XIV. of the original  
' and my translation). This is MR. TWINING'S NOTE.

[O] Either of the poetic art in general, or of tragedy alone, Mr. Twining I imagine understands it here in the last sense.

informed



informed us of what he esteems to be the peculiar end of the epic imitation?

This ultimate decision of Aristotle in favor of tragedy, does not however satisfy Metastasio, who certainly ranks very high among the dramatic writers of the present age. He says, 'I do not know why Aristotle has been here silent on the greatest merit of the tragic poet: I mean that of fulfilling while he is writing, the indispensable duty of divesting himself entirely of his own ideas, and never speaking from his own heart, but always from that of another: an art which implies a knowledge very difficult to acquire, and an uncommon activity of powers to assume at pleasure the character, that is to say, the disposition of mind of the person introduced: an art that produces the most exquisite of all pleasures, while it renders visible the different internal changes of the affections of the human soul in different individuals, with which the poet, being himself thoroughly possessed accordingly as the particular case happens to require, has the power also of possessing the minds of his spectators, and drawing them with him, by a kind of pleasing enchantment, wherever he chuses: an art taught us in a masterly manner by Horace, in his Art of Poetry.

[P] "Non satis pulchra esse poemata dulcia funto,

"Et quocunque volent animum auditoris agunto."

' An

[P] See Note III. Chap. XIX. It is something whimsical that the Roman poet should include this precept in a rhymed couplet; and an Italian, a professed enemy to blank verse, should have adopted that verse in his translation. Is not this a strong instance of possible improbability? Metastasio's translation is

' Che la sola beltà pregio bastante

' D'un Poema non è, senza quel dolce

' In



‘An art indeed so necessary to the tragic poet, that its being neglected by the great Torquato Tasso, has rendered him as much inferior to himself in his *Torismond*, as in his immortal *Godfrey* he is superior to every other poet.’ *ESTRATTO DELLA POETICA*, page 361.

But though Aristotle has omitted to mention this requisite in his concluding comparison, he has not forgot it in the course of the *Poetic*. In Chap. xvii. he insists strongly on this essential duty of the tragic poet, but the reason why he does not mention it here may be his esteeming it equally essential to, and equally attainable by, the epic poet: since in Chap. xxiv. he particularly commends Homer for divesting himself of his own character in his poems. And his words [P], taken by themselves in their obvious and literal sense, give him the preference in this respect to all poets whatever, whether epic, or dramatic, though the context I think confines it to the former.

Experience however seems to confirm, in some degree, the distinction of *Metafasio*. We have no opportunity of judging how Homer would have succeeded in the drama, as that species of imitation was not invented when he lived; but undoubtedly we may pronounce from our own feelings that the most pathetic parts of his epopees, beautiful as

‘Incanto seduttore, che in mille affetti

‘A voglio suo lo spettator trasporta.’

This translation affords a strong proof of the power the Italian language possesses beyond our own in inverting the order of the words: a great advantage in versification, and especially in blank verse. See Note vi. Chap. xxi.

[P] *μόνος τῶν ποιητῶν, ἃς ἀγνοεῖ ὁ θεὸς ποιῆν αὐτόν.*



they are, can by no means bear any comparison as to their effect on the passions with the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides, however superior we must allow them to be in every other respect. Metastasio has just shewn the inferiority of Tasso to himself in his attempt at the drama. Milton seems strongly to suggest the same idea as well in Sampson Agonistes as in the mode he recommends to be pursued in the arrangement of some of those stories which he has selected from our own annals as proper subjects for tragedy [Q]. And as to the comic epopee, and comedy, we have such an instance of this deficiency in one composition with the highest degree of excellence in the other, in one of our own writers, as to be quite wonderful. I mean Fielding. Who to read his novels would suppose him not capable of entering enough into the characters of the persons he delineates for the purpose of the drama? Yet that it is so, seems absolutely certain from his dramatic attempts. Since therefore nothing but experience could have shewn us the inability of Fielding to produce dramatic effect [R], it is impossible for us to infer what might have been the success of Homer or Virgil had they attempted tragedy; for who could have believed, had not the proof been before our eyes, that the author of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones was incapable of writing a tolerable comedy?

[Q] Of all these, he enters most in detail on the story of Alfred, which he observes with a natural bias to his own peculiar excellence, would be a proper subject for an heroic poem.

[R] See Beattie on Music and Poetry, Part I. Chap. v. p. 111, note. A French critic has made the same observation on Voltaire. M. Linguet, in his Critical Analysis of his Works, says, speaking of his comedies, 'In his romances, in his tales, in his discussions, 'apparently of the most serious nature, we meet with fallies which excite bursts of laughter, 'or fly strokes of wit which afford a more refined, though a less sensible gratification. But 'his comedies are very far from possessing either of these excellencies.'

Yet



Yet though the drama has the superiority in point of interest, perhaps the epopee has it in many other instances. And certainly it requires greater skill in the poet to excite the necessary interest, however inferior, in so long and various a composition as the epopee, than the strongest degree of it in the shorter and simpler form of the drama. Besides, the epopee depends more on itself; the poet is at the same time poet, actor, and manager. He not only furnishes the piece, but the theatrical apparatus. If the dramatic poet attains his end more effectually, he also attains it more easily. It undoubtedly requires a greater genius to write a good epic poem than a good tragedy. The examples of one are beyond comparison more frequent than those of the other. A drama may be very affecting and very ill written. As Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, are never mentioned in competition with Homer, or Seneca with Virgil, so neither are Southern, Otway, or Rowe with Milton, with Dryden, (who could not, or at least did not, write a good play) or with Pope. Shakespear is indeed almost an exception to this rule as he is to every other. Like the phoenix he is himself a species and not an individual. To compare him, in point of general merit, with any of our other dramatic writers, would be absurdity in the highest degree. Yet if merit is to be decided even in one drama compared with another, solely on its producing its destined end by exciting the passions in the strongest degree, I believe Mrs. Siddons has affected the feelings of the audience in a much higher degree in the *Isabella* of Southern, and the *Belvidera* of Otway, than Garrick ever could in the *Lear*, or Mrs. Siddons in the *Constance*, or the *Desdemona* of Shakespear. Of the other writings of Shakespear we can only say they are in no degree to be mentioned with his dramatic writings. But his dramatic writings, if they do not come up to that point of pathetic interest, which inferior writers are sometimes able to attain, and in which Aristotle gives the



preference to Euripides over all the other dramatic writers of Greece, (though strongly as he insists on this particular species of excellence, he seems in general to esteem him inferior to Sophocles,) they possess excellence of another kind in a very superior degree. The dramatic writings of Shakespear contain all the variety, the minute description, and the scenery, independent of representation, which we find in the epopee, both serious and comic united. And to this is joined the interesting detail, and exact delineation of the drama, as well as that compression both of composition and incident, by which the connexion of the events is so much more clearly comprehended, and their effect so much less divided in the drama than the epopee. And possessing in a high degree the qualities of the epic poet, he has been able to exhibit models to future dramatic poets both in comedy and tragedy, without having read the Iliad or the Odyssey, or heard of the Margites.

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